



How To Despook Your Horse In A Way It Understands
Using Herd Leader Dynamics And Its Natural Instincts

~ Marv Walker

A Little Known Way To Despook Horses
That Takes Its Attention Off The Spook
And Puts Its Attention On You Where It Belongs

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Editor Acknowledgment

Sandy Chapin



Sandy Chapin in North Frigid Dakota

I greatly appreciate the effort and diligence put forth by Sandy in the editing of this publication.

If you have a message you want to present I recommend you get Sandy to edit it for you, you'll be surprised by the difference.

I am a “I write as I speak, what you see is what you get” author and she has greatly increased the clarity and look of *How To Despook Your Horse In A Way It Understands Using Herd Leader Dynamics And Its Natural Instincts*.

[Sandy Chapin](#) lives with her husband, horses, cats and chickens on a farm in North

Dakota where she keeps busy with knitting, gardening and everything else that needs doing on a farm.

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Safety - Read This

Since this is an ebook about dealing with spooking in horses it is only fitting I should say a little about safety.

Many people who have horses only know what they see on TV and have read in emotionally charged books such as Black Beauty, Walter Farley's Black Stallion books and so on. There are many who have horses, there are relatively few who are horse people.

Most people who acquire a horse really don't know sicc-um about horses. They think horses are neat. They have always wanted one and now all the planets have lined up and made it possible to finally get one.

Here's what I tell people...

If you are involved with horses you WILL be injured. It is not a question of IF but WHEN and those injuries can range from hardly noticeable contusions, bruises and abrasions to death.

I myself have been severely injured several times and nearly killed by horses. I have personally known people who have been killed and people who have had debilitating life changing injuries from them.

Size has nothing to do with degree of danger. A little horse can injure you just as quickly as a large one. Not too long ago I happened to look over in a paddock where a girl about 10 was grooming a mini gelding who appeared to be zoned out and eating up the grooming as he had done a number of times before. She was standing directly behind him brushing his hind quarters when all of a sudden with no warning and for no apparent reason I could see he dropped his hindquarters to power them into the air and he mule-kicked her square in the middle of her stomach and literally sent her 7 feet through the air into the wooden fence.

Fortunately she was close enough to him to where he lifted and tossed her through the air. If she would have taken the hit in mid-kick she would have certainly had more injured than her feelings.

Be sure to wear an approved [helmet](#). The link mostly is about the use of a helmet when riding. Use the helmet whenever you are around horses. Many injuries occur on the ground next to the horse.

Years ago I was squatting in front of a week old foal, looking him over. He suddenly and unexpectedly struck out and his hoof caught me right in the center of the forehead and knocked me backwards. His hoof hit the brim of the helmet I just happened to be wearing after working a lively green grown horse. If I hadn't been wearing that helmet I could have been seriously injured. As it was he knocked me onto my back.

And an equestrian's protective vest isn't all that bad an idea either.

You will also want to be wearing good leather footwear. No flip flops - (I once saw a horse step on the back of its leader's flip flops. Stopped the leader's progress, didn't slow the horse down a bit.) - or flimsy shoes. Steel toed shoes or boots are a plus. Don't worry, the horse won't cut your toes off. That's a myth, unless you are wearing very flimsy shoes. If you lose your toes wearing steel toed boots chances are you'd have lost them anyway.

Bottom line, you DO NOT want to get your foot between the horse's hoof and the ground. YOU WILL NOT LIKE IT!!

But, don't take my word for it, Google [*horse stepped on foot*](#).

If you're a true horse person, what I say won't stop you. It doesn't stop me. It is my hope that you will at least wear protective gear and use great caution when working with horses.

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Spooking Is Very Dangerous

You may be reading this book because you just want to know the basics, but I'm going to go in depth because it's important you understand despooking inside and out to get the most benefit out of your despooking efforts.

Despooking is the most important thing we can do with our horses.

Spooking is by far and away the most dangerous thing a horse can do. The only concern the horse has when it is spooked is itself. It doesn't matter if you happen to be in the way or not.

It is extremely important that we despook our horses in a calculated and thorough manner. Even at that there is no guarantee the horse won't spook. The best we can do is to lessen the chances of the horse spooking. While the information in this eBook will greatly lessen the chances of your horse spooking, it will certainly make the horse much less spooky and more dependable.

This eBook deeply explores spooking in horses. The more we know about spooking in horses the more options we have to deal with it. The overwhelming despooking work done by horse people consists of getting the horse accustomed to a few items – such as flapping items such as feed sack, saddle pad or blanket, and even a saddle.

While despooking a horse using its natural instincts is rather straight forward and surprisingly simple an in-depth knowledge of spooking in horses allows you to see the relationship between fear and focus.

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About Marv Walker



For 60+ years I have had a love affair with horses.

The first horses I had any experience with were my grandfather's heavy draft horses. I can close my eyes and still smell and hear them, especially the times when he would harness them to skid logs, work the fields or gather ice for the ice house from the frozen lakes of Michigan's Upper Peninsula close to the shores of Lake Superior in the winter. My uncles would saw huge chunks of ice from the thick ice at the surface and hook the horses to the chunks with tongs and then they'd skid the ice back to the ice house where it would be buried in sawdust for use in hot months like July & August.

When I was in school I tried everything I could think of to be able to ride because having a horse of my own was beyond our family's means. Money was so hard to come by the words of the Country song, "If the wolf woulda come to our front door he'da had to bring a picnic lunch," was us.

I struck a deal with a riding stable owner who assured me I'd be able to swap my work for riding. And I would have been able to had there been any horses that were not needed for paying clients to ride or horses that were tired from being ridden. Every riding stable I've ever had anything to do with became a riding stable because they had a herd of horses and the horses needed to earn a little of their keep. Most of the stables had about 40 horses of which 8 or so were rideable. The rest were vice-ridden or unsound.

When I asked about all the other horses out in the pastures I was given all kinds of reasons as to why those horses were unrideable. They were vice-ridden, had chronic physical issues or weren't broke to ride. It quickly became evident that if I was going to get much riding in I was going to have to do it on the sly and it was going to have to be the vice-ridden horses that I rode.

I guess it was that beginning that gave me my preference for vice-ridden horses. I learned a lot from

them and over the years became fairly adept at solving problems.

For a long time I used the "force" method of getting a horse to comply with what I wanted. I always operated under the idea that the horse was just spoiled and I needed to show it who was boss. More often than not, I was able to show them. Sometimes, they showed me and that became the inspiration for my line, "I'm a Cereal Cowboy... I Snap, Crackle & Pop when I move."

Then I met Linda Tellington-Jones. I attended one of her clinics nearly 30 years ago and mere minutes watching LT-J convinced me there was a better way of dealing with horses and opened up a whole new world. I became aware that horses can have headaches, off days, physical problems that may not be obvious or may even have mental problems that prevent them from being able to give their best.

Since then I have eagerly devoured every bit of information I could find on the subject of horse awareness. Wherever I found it I weighed it against common sense, success, and whether or not it met my new criteria of working with the horse instead of working the horse:

- 1.) It had to be reasonably safe for the horse *AND* me;
- 2.) The horse had to accept it;
- 3.) It had to show positive results;
- 4.) It had to work every time I used it.

If it failed ANY of the tests I didn't use the technique.

I spent a lot of time in my life simply observing horses and watching how they interacted with each other. I saw they had a ranking or pecking order within the herd that set some individuals up as leaders and the rest as followers. I began working some of those things I observed the horses doing into the work I was doing with horses.

But it was a lot of hit and miss. Everything I tried seemed to work but the problem I had was trying to figure out how to time the steps.

I had developed somewhat of a local reputation for being able to get into a horse's mind. I was able to develop a bonded relationship with almost any horse I worked. I would keep working with a horse until the horse screamed at me, "I'VE GOT THE PROGRAM, YOU MORON!!! I DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO TO CONVINCING YOU!!!"

At that point I'd slap myself on the back, "Good job, you did it again."

And then I read an angst-laden "horse training" tome written by one of the media darlings at the time. All I found were a couple little bits of information about horse behavior that I had noticed but hadn't quite grasped the significance of. Once I realized that someone else was aware of these behaviors I knew instantly why my system worked so well and I *KNEW* at that moment how to predictably duplicate my results in minutes instead of days, weeks, months, and even years.

My first horse after that realization was a very annoying, dangerous-to-ride 19 year old broodmare and show horse we had. If you were still on her or in the cart at the end of the class, you were high in the ribbons. Those who rode her considered it a religious experience - "Let me off and I'll never ask for anything again!!!" It was described to me as riding a motorcycle with no brakes. When we retired from the show business and the trainer's brother brought her home he handed me the lead rope and said, "I rode that horse, once." Leading her was no joy either. I was just tired of her antics and intended to put some leading manners on her as a test of my new revelation.

In about five minutes I had a totally different horse. She became my favorite all time trail horse. The rapid results I obtained with her gave me a sense of horse confidence that is pretty much unflappable.

Around that time the Horse Whisperer thing got started and someone called the paper about a local "whisperer" they knew of. The next thing I know I'm much better known and people are contacting me from around the world asking my advice on horse problems. Folks kept asking for clinics so I started doing clinics. I do clinics, private work around the country, consult with folks outside the country and sell a variety of how to solve horse problem videos around the world.

In addition I served as a long time president of a rather large saddle club. I was also actively involved in the successful Conyers, GA bid for the 1996 Olympic Equestrian Events which resulted in the construction of the Georgia International Horse Park. I published a world wide equine magazine. I was a long-time traditional freelance writer. I outfitted an entire therapeutic riding program for a large Georgia children's home by acquiring free horses while my horse friends scoffed.

I have learned a lot about horses just by observing them. They have taught me some powerful concepts about themselves, people and animals in the years I have been fascinated by them. This ebook contains the mechanics of one of their most instinctive abilities, self-preservation, and how to use their self-preservation instincts to make the horse human relationship dramatically better for each.

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Just For Your Information

Spooking is the number one subject that has people from all over the world calling or emailing me about horse problems. The despooring pages are the most read pages at my high traffic website MaryWalker.com. The number one DVD of my entire inventory that people order is my [Despooring DVD](#). The number one seller of my ePublication offerings are spooking related.

Spooking is the number one horse problem because it is so deeply ingrained in horses. Spooking and horses go together like quacking and ducks. All horses spook to varying degrees. Spooking in horses ranges from those horses that hardly spook at anything, all the way to those horses for which there is hardly anything at which they won't spook.

Spooking is unpredictable and when its unexpectedness or severity catches someone by surprise they get on the Internet looking for "the cure."

Strangely, spooking catches so many by surprise because most of the horses they see or are around aren't spooking all that much. And then there are those who know horses spook but think it can easily be eliminated with a little desensitization or "sacking out." And then there is the degree of spookiness in the horse - it may be spooked by some things and not other things.

I continually see horse-for-sale ads or horse wanted ads that contain the phrase, "Bombproof, child safe." There is no such animal. There are horses who are less spooky than others for whatever reason, but all horses are subject to unexpected reactions. You can have a horse that nothing seems to bother until a higher ranked horse makes a move to bite it, kick it or move into its space.

This ebook is intended to explore the subject of spooking in horses; what it is, it's causes and various techniques used to address it.

This ebook also covers a despooring technique that takes advantage of the horse's natural herd dynamics of self-preservation rather than item specific desensitization using "flags", plastic sheets, treats or what have you. Herd dynamics despooring takes advantage of the horse's natural instinct rather than an item specific investigation. With herd dynamic despooring we are taking advantage of a concept - when spooked, whatever the reason, look to us for the solution.

The dynamics of the herd are not for the good of the herd. They are for the good of the individual. The herd exists for the good of the individual. The herd dynamics, or as many call them, the pecking order, can be summed up by, "I am more worthy, or important, than you are." Strangely, this summation is accepted by all the herd and is the basis for the horse's natural preservation. Spooking is the act of self preservation.

This ebook will immerse you into the world of horses and bring you to a new awareness of yourself and horses.

Read this book from beginning to end. Each chapter builds on the one before and it is important to understand all the nuts and bolts involved in despooning your horse using the horse's natural genetically pre-programmed instincts.

The more you understand, the more you'll gain.

There is a lot of repetition in this book because it includes articles and pieces I've written elsewhere as well as things I've written for the book itself. Since I operate from a basic level, I often go back to the basics and repeat them to ingrain them.

There is a lot to be said for the phrase, "Bears repeating."

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What Is Spooking?

What is spooking? Spooking is when a horse has an adverse reaction to an object or situation.

We once had a horse who looked up while in its large paddock and saw a bird cage being carried down the driveway several hundred feet away and took off wide-eyed. It bolted wide open across the paddock making no effort to slow down or jump the gate as it crashed head first into the gate literally flipping over it to land on its back. I was cantering a horse I was training down a road when a wind controlled cattle feeder out in the field was turned by the wind, the horse instantly stopped and started rapidly backing up. I saw a horse playing with a piece of binder twine and it picked it up and immediately panicked and wildly raced around the pasture trying to outrun the twine it had in its mouth until the twine fell away.

Everyone who knows anything about horses recognizes adverse reactions to objects or situations like these as "spooks."

What do you call it if you go to put a halter on a horse and it raises its head out of your reach? If you go to brush the horse, lift a saddle toward it, or ask for a hoof and it side steps away, what is that? What about the horse who hates men or hats or whips or you messing with its food? The horse that won't load without a hassle, what about that? What about the horse that fights fly spraying or clipping?

I personally call them spooks. They are adverse reactions to object or situations.

A spook is a spook, however, horse people tend to call them spooks only when they exceed their acceptance level of the reaction. Until their acceptance level is breached they dismiss all adverse reactions as the horse's "thing." A "spook" is a reaction of the horse that endangers itself or human, a "thing" or "quirk" is merely an annoyance to be worked through.

Any adverse reaction to an object or situation is a spook.

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Bombproof Child Safe Horses



First of all, there is absolutely no such thing as a "bombproof child safe horse."

There are horses who have very little tendency to spook, very few things bother them or cause them concern. I have had horses that wouldn't even blink when a large tree branch crashed down on the tin roof above them or when a flock of turkeys or deer exploded under their noses out of the brush we were going through.

Even horses like this will spook when another horse pushes into their path or makes an aggressive move toward it.

Many times the tendency of the horse to spook depends on the confidence and experience of the horse person handling it or riding it and the term "bombproof" may be the person's perception of the term. The horse may be a basket case with someone who is uncertain.

Experienced horse people will understand the term "bombproof child-safe horse" doesn't mean it will NEVER spook but less experienced-horse people may not understand spooking is always a possibility.

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What Is Spookiness?

Spookiness is self-preservation in horses.

Apparently horses are quite tasty. My grandfather told me he had eaten meat in Europe when he served in World War I. He said it was tasty enough, but not tasty enough to bring horse-meat eating back home as a regular practice. He felt his horses were too good and too valuable to eat. But in a number of places around the world horses are table fare. And, one must understand that on occasion even in this country some of the natives ate horses.

In addition to people, there are a number of other critters who won't turn up their noses at a meal of horse meat. Coyotes, wolves, large cats and even large birds such owls and eagles all are willing to chow down on a horse if the situation is just right. Badgers and fishers are also open to a bite under some conditions.

The more alert a horse is the longer the horse is likely to live. It's better to be too alert than not alert enough. Being over reactive seldom gets you eaten. Being under reactive can get you invited for lunch.

Spookiness in horses is an abrupt self-preservation response to a perceived or actual threat. The sooner the self-preservation response the better. Why wait for a perceived bear on the hilltop to get any closer?

If you were to ask most horse people to define spooking they would pretty much describe an abrupt, sudden and often unexpected movement. Spookiness takes on many forms. If a horse suddenly bolts for no apparent reason, that's spooking. If you go to put a halter, bridle, saddle or harness on a horse and it moves away, that's spooking. Pick the horse's hoof up and it jerks it away, that's spooking. Put your foot in the stirrup and the horse moves away, that's spooking. Spooking is moving aside when you go to do anything to the horse. Spooking is refusing to go where the horse is led or directed to go. Refusing to load is spooking. Bolting is spooking.

Spooking is ANY unwanted movement in response to ANY perceived threat.

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Causes Of Spookiness

Spookiness, or self-preservation against threats to one's well being, is in the horse's DNA. All horses spook to some degree. Very few things bother some horses, while some horses are bothered by pretty much everything. There is no such thing as a bombproof, child-safe horse. All horses are subject to unpredictable reactions.

To begin with horses are born wary. When they are foals they look to Mom and take their cue from her. They take off after her when she takes off even if they have no idea why she is fleeing. As time goes on and they are weaned and no longer have Mom, they take off after others who are fleeing even if they have no idea why they are fleeing. Not only does the horse feed off the frights of others but it becomes hyper-vigilant to the point it will also feed off its own frights regardless of whether they are real or imagined.

I once saw a horse fooling around with a hay string that had gotten into the pasture. He idly picked it up and when the rest of it moved he panicked and took off with the string still in his mouth. He tried to get away from it by making several wide open loops at ever increasing speed around the 10 acre

pasture with the hay string streaming alongside him. Most of the other horses thought "Don't know what's after him, but whatever it is, we have to outrun it too."

It was hay string bedlam. The string finally managed to turn him loose and he and the herd gathered together up in the corner of the pasture looking in every direction for the monster hay string and loudly blowing "WHEW! That was close!!!"

Every horse individually forms its natural spookability over time. Its individual spookiness depends on its environment - DNA, mother, other horses around it with their own varying degrees of spookiness and their own experience in dealing with uncertainty. While a horse is born with the tendency to be spooky, its spooking characteristic is formed from a number of influences around it. This is not unlike a human whose individual characteristics are formed by the influences around them.

Sometimes the horse can needlessly increase its self-preservation instincts by its own reactions. It can be so hyper-vigilant it sees threats that aren't there - it becomes frightened that it may be frightened.

In addition to the environmental influences around the horse all working together to build its spookiness, there is very often a physical component involved in the mix. Physical issues can limit the horse's ability to assess the threat and increase the urgency of reacting to the spook.

A horse's spookiness can also be influenced by its lack of a sense of place. It not only feels it doesn't belong in the situation it is in and/or may not feel it knows what is expected of it in the situation it's in. The horse has no confidence. Confidence is knowing you can provide exactly what is expected of you when it is expected of you. A horse with no sense of place does not know where it fits in and is always vigilant and uncertain.

And then there is the human component. These are spooks that are not in the head of the horse, they are in the head of the human. One of the places we see this is when a handler is loading a horse in a trailer while thinking, "Oh, I hope he loads! I don't feel like fighting him!" The human has a self-preservation thought and the horse immediately picks up on it and also has a self-preservation thought, "Hmmm... Something up there is causing this human concern, I need to watch myself! Go in there??? Don't think so!"

Spookiness can have any or all of these causes in any combination: Genetics, the example of other horses, its life experiences, its expectations, physical issues, its sense of place, and human influences.

The best method of despooning horses is one that takes all possible causes into consideration.

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Worst Case Spooking Scenario

"What happened to you??" I asked a long time very experienced horse person I know when I saw him in town. He was skinned up; had a large angry spot of road rash on his calf, scratches here and there, a gash on his head and he was walking rather gimpy.

He then began to tell me about a horse wreck on a horse he was "breaking." He'd broken a lot of horses in his time with no trouble, but that horse was different, essentially jittery in his own skin.

Here is the paraphrased part that stuck with me, "I did a lot of desensitizing and ground work with him, much more than I've ever done with any other horse before I even got on him. I flexed him right and left to check his give and off we went into the field. We'd been going among the cows when all of a sudden he took off. I pulled his head around and he just tipped it and let it come back, eyes rolled back in its head, and kept on going. He didn't even slow down, change direction or avoid the round pen

panel and we went into it at full speed."

I got an email from a person who told me he had desensitized his horse to the sound of the Velcro on his saddle bag flaps before he started out on a trail ride. He rode for quite awhile and on his way back to the trailer he decided he wanted a drink of water. At the rip of the Velcro the horse did a little ripping of his own and went into a bucking fit his rider couldn't sit. He found the horse a mile down the trail. "At 64 I don't want to do that no more."

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Desensitizing & Despooking Differences

Most horse folk understand the term, "desensitizing".

Desensitizing is getting the horse to accept something new to it or unexpected things that may cause a fear or spooking reaction where the horse has only one thing in mind - get away from it NOW!!!

Desensitizing is bringing the horse and the fear closer and closer together until the horse no longer reacts to it. The amount of desensitizing performed with a horse varies depending upon the fear of the horse and the owner's or handler's satisfaction. The actual desensitizing depends on the owner's personality and nature.

There is no consistency in desensitizing. Some will take a chair and a book into the fearful horse's enclosure and sit there reading their book for as long as it takes for the horse to accept their presence. Some tiptoe through the process, some crack a whip, wave plastic bags, or use tarps or other scary objects they find around the homestead. .

Some are very thorough, desensitizing to everything they can think of. I currently see Facebook postings from someone who is taking tiny baby steps desensitizing their horse and proudly showing the horse calmly accepting a blanket, wearing a halter, allowing its feet to be lifted and so on.

Others only do the bare minimum when desensitizing a horse. They work on getting the horse to accept a saddle blanket, then the saddle, then the bridle and then they get on and plow rein and kick the horse until the horse gets the idea and off they go to desensitize the horse more whenever the need pops up.

The problem with desensitizing a horse to an object or a situation is its inconsistency and its open endedness. Something usually pops up later that requires desensitizing.

Traditional desensitizing teaches the horse that every time something unnerves or frightens the horse that everything will come to a halt until it accepts the object or situation..The horse is usually encouraged to gradually approach and examine the object or situation until it shows no reaction to the object.

For example, if the horse shows concern over a discarded dishwasher on the trail the horse is often coaxed to approach the appliance until the horse shows no concern. We pat ourselves on the back because Dobby is desensitized to dishwashers. If a little on further a horse eating moldy rotted old mattress is waiting to pounce we go through the whole approach scenario again.

I used the dishwasher and mattress as examples because I have actually seen them along horse trails and had horses in the group frightened by them. In both cases the riders went out of their way to "desensitize" the horses to the spook. In the mattress instance all the other horses walked freely over it and one would not. The rider became focused on getting the horse over the mattress.

Forty five minutes later the horse was no closer to the mattress and I was the first to continue on down the trail. I didn't see the horse and rider for the rest of the ride but I did see the rider a few days later and I resisted the urge to ask if it had ever walked over the mattress.

Desensitizing a horse is actually despooning the horse, yet many people consider desensitizing and despooning to be two different areas.

I actually do not do desensitizing or despooning. I am not the least bit interested in WHAT caused the concern. I teach the horse to look to me whenever it is concerned and I will deal with whatever is concerning the horse. I only have to teach the horse one thing that applies every time it is concerned, "Look to me! I will deal with it."

And that dealing with it usually is simply ignoring it. If the horse is looking to me and I'm ignoring the "spook", whatever it is, the horse ignores it also.

Desensitizing is bringing the horse to a point where it is no longer concerned, disturbed or frightened about an object or situation. *Despooning* is bringing the horse to a point where it is no longer concerned, disturbed or frightened about an object or situation.

The terms are interchangeable yet horse people often differentiate between the two. Getting the horse to accept and walk over a tarp is desensitizing. Getting the horse to no longer be concerned about a tarp flapping on a passing truck is despooning.

I did some private work at a very large barn in the middle of Chicago. There were horses grazing unconcerned literally six feet from a very busy and noisy highway with all kinds of traffic that one would expect would have the horses on the barn roof. Inside the barn those same horses would practically jump out of their skin at a dropped curry comb.

ANYTHING that causes a horse to be nervous, concerned or frightened is a SPOOK. And a spook can be the result of pretty much any object or situation.

Doing anything with a horse and having the horse react in a concerned or un-cooperative way is a spook. Leading it and having the horse charge ahead and hit the end of the leadline is a spook. Clipping a bridle path and having the horse jumping all over the place is a spook. A horse refusing to go in the barn because there was a goat in it is a spook. A horse refusing to load is a spook. Horses bolting or refusing to leave the barn or pasture buddy are spooking. And, even the horse refusing to do what you ask from the ground or from its back is a spook.

ANYTHING that causes a horse to be nervous, concerned or frightened is a SPOOK. And a spook can be the result of pretty much any object or situation.

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Working Around Spooks

Giving into a spook and working around it only ingrains the spook. I have been in barns where someone leads a horse by a wash rack that has a horse and handler in it only to have the person in the wash rack bolt out and chastise the person leading the horse because the horse in the wash rack gets all worked up when another horse clomps by.

One of the horses at the therapeutic riding center didn't like goats and he was certain there were goats in the barn so he wouldn't go in it and people would groom and tack him outside. As long as he didn't get within his concern zone he was fine. He was very thick necked and if he was able to bend it to where he could put his shoulder into the leadline he was gone, pulling his handler along running, land skiing or dragging. He was fine if you tied him outside his concern zone. Volunteers however, had to carry gear farther but they'd rather do that than fight him into the barn.

Pussy footing around and protecting the horse from the spook keeps the spook alive.

Working toward getting the horse to the object or situation until it accepts the object or situation teaches the horse that everything comes to a halt while the spooker is closely examined and determined to be harmless. There usually is a new spooker popping up that requires the same approach and examine technique.

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The Abnormally Spooky Horse

What's an abnormally spooky horse? It's an abnormally spooky horse. (Sorry, couldn't resist.) An abnormally spooky horse is one who appears to inconsistently spook with little rhyme or reason. The abnormally spooky horse spooks at things it has seldom paid any attention to in the past. It spooks at things used on it and around it every day. It may be in the wash rack just like it has been every day of its life and a horse being led by the rack may cause it to spook. No amount of "desensitizing" or "sacking out" seems to help.

When you spend most of your time around the horse watching the horse to make sure it doesn't jump on you or run over you and you dread unexpected sounds and movements around you, you have an abnormally spooky horse.

I have discovered, in my problem solving practice, a very high percentage of abnormally spooky horses have physical issues.

The most common physical issue in abnormally spooky horses is cervical subluxations - vertebrae misalignments in the neck. The scientific name for this condition is "stiff neck." There are degrees of stiff neck. Stiff neck can range from "my neck is a little stiff" to "touch me and die!" stiff.

A pivot point is that part of the body where one half of the body moving in one direction meets the other half moving in the other direction. There is little rotation or movement of the pivot point. The farther the front and back are from each other, the faster the movement in relation to the pivot point. If you slowly turn a wheel you will see any point on the edge of the wheel moves faster than any point closer to the center which is the pivot point of the wheel.

If humans have stiff necks and something off to the side gets their attention they pivot their body instead of just turning their heads to look. After all, what do you expect, they have a stiff neck? This is

nothing really out of the ordinary. Since the chances of something getting them aren't all that great humans can take their time and turn slowly. The point a human body pivots around is mere inches from the farthest point of the body's mass.

If a horse has a stiff neck and something off to the side gets their attention they need to assess it as quickly as possible because they are convinced the world is out to eat them, they also have to turn their body instead of just turning their heads to look. The farthest point of a horse's body mass is about two feet from its pivot point and moves like an apple on the end of a limber stick. The closer you are to the edge of the horse's body mass the more spectacular the movement. This is really where the word "spook" comes from, it catches the human by surprise and spooks him, or her. (Okay, it's a bit of a joke, but horses aren't the only ones who are spooked by spooks.)

A stiff neck for example, can hinder the horse from normally observing around itself. Since the horse has a very high sense of self preservation it may intensify its reactions to compensate for the stiff or sore neck. In situations where it might normally just glance it may pivot abruptly to assess the threat. If it is too difficult, painful or time consuming in the horse's mind to turn and examine, the horse may just flee without taking any time to assess.

Pretty much any physical issue can cause spooking but skeletal issues are the most commonly overlooked because they are not visible to the huge majority of horse people. I have only known of one clinician in my life to suggest a physical issue hidden to the eye may be the cause of the excessive, or as we are discussing, abnormal spookiness.

The very first thing I recommend in an abnormally spooky horse situation is an equine chiropractic examination. I believe in chiropractic to the point where if a chiropractic exam of an abnormally spooky horse uncovers no skeletal issues, it's time for a different chiropractor. Am I saying that a physical issue is always the cause of abnormal spookiness? No. What I'm saying is a physical issue is so often part of the problem it makes no sense not to make it the first go-to when searching for the answer in your abnormally spooky horse.

Cervical subluxations are the most common skeletal problems. I believe this is because the head and neck are almost always the first to get somewhere and they take the first risk of injury with the least amount of protective flesh. You've heard the old saying, "Stick your neck out?" There you go.

Anything can happen to that neck. Roughhousing with each other, rolling in the dirt, pulling back when tied, suddenly changing the direction of head movement, any abrupt movement along with a bunch of other stuff. Horse's heads and necks go through a lot of stuff while dangling out there in the air. They are pretty tough but they are also surprisingly vulnerable as well. If conditions are just right, If conditions are just right, the horse ends up with a stiff, sore neck.

The horse is going to do everything it can think of to hide its stiff neck or other physical issue so the stiffness may very well escape our notice. Why would it want to hide a physical issue? Because every horse knows a horse muncher is going to single out the weaker horses for a dinner invitation. Just because a physical issue isn't obvious doesn't mean the horse doesn't have one.

Very often a cervical, thoracic, lumbar, or sacral subluxation can be both seen and felt. Many traditional vets Phoo-Phoo this statement maintaining if a vertebrae was out of alignment enough to see it or feel it the horse would be dead. This is true as it concerns the vertebrae itself. A vertebrae can be severely out (subluxated) and the mis-alignment will be undetected by the human eye. But it is not actually the vertebrae we see. What we see is the swelling of the muscular tissue around it as it attempts to protect and correct the subluxation.

This corrective swelling of the muscular tissue can cause a variety of issue indicators. Dips, bumps, unusual hair patterns, irregular footfall length, odd hoof wear and a number of other indicators can

suggest chiropractic issues.

If you don't know of an equine chiropractor and you can't find one in your area you can try <http://AVCADoctors.com>.

Chiropractic pays huge dividends to the point it pays for itself in your horse's overall health and well being.

In addition to skeletal issues there are other physical issues that can make a horse abnormally spooky as well. A physical issue at any point in the horse can affect any other point in the horse. I have long lost count of the times someone has contacted me and said, "My horse is lame in the left front and the vets can't find anything. Help!" I then say, "Look at the right rear." They often get back to me all amazed and wonder how I figured it out so quick. Get a cut on the bottom of your foot and you'll see this principle in action. There used to be a sitcom years ago called "The Real McCoys." The main character, played by Walter Brennan, had a limp where each step would make almost his entire body jump. When he'd step, his elbows, shoulders and hands would jump. If a person had a hitch in his get-along I would expect him to have body compensating issues. A stubbed toe can give you a headache, a headache can give you a stubbed toe. The whole body works together to protect an injured area even to the extent of injuring something else. A hoof can cause an ear problem, an ear can cause a hoof problem.

A physical issue is the first thing to look for in an abnormally spooky horse.

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A Chiropractic Pre-Flight

An equine chiropractic exam is always the first thing I recommend with an abnormally spooky horse. And it is also the very first thing I do when I'm essentially doing anything with a horse that acts outside of the way horses normally act.

How do horses normally act when you are working with them? After you work with a number of horses you will find there are consistent responses to your actions. A horse that reacts outside of the way you would expect a horse to react based upon your horse experience from working with other horses is an abnormally spooky horse.

Before we go any further I have to say that I am not a chiropractor of any sort, however I have met a few chiropractors and have asked them all sorts of questions since I was paying them.

Speaking of pay, here's a little secret - Equine chiropractic, doesn't cost, it pays. Well, the chiropractors kind of like to have you pay them and not the other way around, but the return you get for your money in horse comfort, ease of movement and fluidity is stunning. It is beyond the subject of this chapter to include equine dentistry and equine sports massage therapy in this maximum return on investment (MROI) as well so I won't.

A friend of mine told me, "I was sitting on the edge of the bed and I bent down to tie my shoe. The next thing I knew I was flat out on the floor on my face screaming and sucking lint off the carpet." Chiropractic problems can hit you on the spur of the moment and horses (and dogs, cats, birds, anything with a skeleton, but I digress) are no different.

Any abrupt movement can cause a chiropractic or muscular problem.

I had a lady drive 60 some miles to get a copy of my [\\$12 Despoeking DVD](#) rather than have it mailed

to her. Her horse was annoyingly spooky and was getting worse to the point she was concerned about riding it. What does annoyingly spooky mean? It means spooky enough to cause a problem.

I essentially told her I suspected a cervical subluxation and for her to do the following...

The very first thing you want to do is compare each side of the horse to the other. This simply means to mentally (that means, IN YOUR HEAD) split the horse exactly down the middle from nose to tail. What you see on one side of the horse you should see on the other. Start at the nose and work your way back.

Look at the ears, are they level? Check the groove between the back of the jaw (mandible) and the bony protuberance (atlas/axis, or as some call it, the "yes/no" joint) located at about 4 o'clock just below the horse's ears, is it the same width on both sides? Are the bony protuberances level on each side? Do they stick out equal distance from the horse's head in the same direction? Examine the horse's neck, are the dips found on one side found on the other? Are bumps found on one side found on the other? Does the horse's mane all flip to the same side? Lower the horse's head straight out in front of it, is the top of the neck a straight line back to the withers?

If you answered "no" to any of the above, you need an equine chiropractor.

Look at the horse from the side, any finger-wide dips or bumps showing along the horse's spine? Look at the horse's ribs from the sides, any of them farther out or farther in than the others? Looking at the horse's sides, do you see any obvious hair patterns on one side you don't see on the other? Look at the horse's spine from above, see any bumps off to either side of the spine? Just so you don't sound like a novice when you call the equine chiropractor for a spine abnormality, what you see is not actually the spine. The spine is several inches below the topline, what you see are called spinous processes, they are the finger-like tops of the vertebrae.

If you answered "yes" to any of the above, you need an equine chiropractor.

Just because all the above were answered correctly does not mean you don't need an equine chiropractor. There are other things that may indicate chiropractic issues as well. One hip or shoulder lower, higher, wider or narrower than the other, snubbed off toes, irregular foot movement, tail cocked to one side, turned out hooves or legs and so on. If you have a spooking problem, it certainly won't hurt to have the horse examined by an equine chiropractor.

If you have the horse examined and the chiropractor does find some things and makes some adjustments you may need a Certified Equine Sports Massage Therapist (CESMT) to help hold the adjustments. And you may need a few chiropractic revisits to help the adjustments hold as well. Subluxations are best addressed with a one-two punch approach, chiropractor (skeletal) and CESMT (muscular).

Chiropractor and CESMT visits are often incredibly beneficial and they are much less costly than a trip to the emergency room. Chiropractor and CESMT visits may not prevent a trip to the emergency room but they sure cut down the odds of having one. All the desensitizing, sacking out and despooning in the world won't do much good if physical issues are a major component of your horse's spookiness.

The lady I mentioned earlier decided before she went back home to have the horse examined by a chiropractor.

She emailed me a couple of weeks later and told me after the chiropractor's visit his spookiness vanished and he was an absolute pleasure to trail ride.

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Lesson From A Bird Feeder.

I once spent an hour examining a 12 inch by 12 patch of ground directly under a bird feeder. After about five minutes examining a small piece of ground you are very strongly tempted to go and see if you can find some paint that is drying. I forced myself to not look away from that patch. I won't go into all of the things I saw, but I saw the seeds in various stages of sprouting, the insect effect on the seeds and so on and the next thing I knew the hour was gone. To this day decades later I can close my eyes and see that patch of ground.

What does that have to do with spooking horses?

I guarantee you if you spend an hour examining your horse and not looking away or allowing yourself to be distracted, that horse will be burnt into your mind and you will notice any changes thereafter.

Some of those changes may contribute to spookiness.

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Breeding Can Affect Spooking

Some breeds of horses are genetically much more prone to spookiness than others.

Oh, I know I'm going to get all kinds of flak for the statement but I'm sticking with it.

For instance, many Arabs are flighty, light on their feet and continually looking all over and are loaded with nervous tension. You touch them anywhere and their whole body quivers. This nervousness is called "the Arab spirit" by many aficionados. Arabs are known for, and admired for, and mostly bred for their "spirit." I cannot tell you how many Arab fanciers have told me, "The Arabs actually keep them in their tents with them." Not the traditional American Arab horses they don't. If you keep the commonly bred American Arab in your tent, you and your tent, what's left of it, will be in Turkey by morning.

This morning at the Therapeutic Riding Center one of the volunteers rode by on a bay she was attempting to get to go where she wanted to go, but he didn't. One of the new volunteers watched for a moment then looked at me and pronounced, "That's an Arab!"

The horse not wanting to go where its rider wanted is spooking. Not spooking in the traditionally accepted sense but spooking none the less, the horse didn't abruptly shy away from what she wanted but it could have.

There is no time limit for working with spooky horses. I've had horses make two steps forward, then make one step backward and then two steps forward, which is still making progress. Once I had a horse I worked with far longer than I normally do. That horse would make two steps forward then five steps backward then three steps forward then two back. She was as inconsistent as it is possible to be.

I will NOT get on a horse until it accepts whatever I do to it or around it, without hurting it, and she never got to that point. Oh, there were numerous times when nothing phased her no matter what I did and I'd think she was close to mounting only to have her go mindless at the slightest occurrence.

After a considerable amount of work I saddled her up and put her in the arena with a line trailing from the saddle figuring I would just let her get used to it, ignore it and get over it. She put her head down to

check the grass and the line moved and off she went.

She made a half dozen or so wide open, wild-eyed loops around the arena before cutting straight across the arena and she never even slowed down as she blew through the three board 2"x8" fence. She was headed straight for the barn yard heavy wooden fence and I thought she was going straight through that to the busy highway. Instead she circled the round pen twice and headed toward the back of the farm. She went through two more wire fences like they weren't even there and headed for the "Way Back" pasture.

Another riding center regular volunteer and I headed after her and came upon her a quarter mile from the barn where she was mindlessly circling a wide thorn thicket at full speed. I had to get into the thorn thicket to keep from getting run over because she clearly didn't see me. I was able to grab her halter on one pass and she stopped. She was blowing and drenched in sweat.

She looked as Appaloosa as an Appaloosa could possibly be. I expressed my concern to the person I'd gotten her from, "I don't understand it, it's like she's a 50-50 horse, the result of a breeding of two totally different breeds, at any given time you don't which breed characteristic is going to take over the horse."

"She's half Arab and half Appaloosa" was the response.

Some of the Apps I have dealt with have been okay horses to deal with but a greater percentage have been more labor intensive. If you're an experienced horse person, this is no biggie. If you are not, you are likely to quickly become more experienced with an App or some other horse that's been bred for a particular characteristic or temperament.

I tell people, if you are not an experienced horse person you need to stay away from horses bred for a particular characteristic, like Arabs, Apps, gaited horses or horses bred for color if you want a relatively drama-free horse relationship.

Why?

Because if you look through the ads in any color horse journal you'll almost always see the obligatory blurb in every ad, "He sure throws pretty babies!!" The horse can be meaner than snake, have all four legs coming out of the same hole or have a neck like a sheep and they'll still breed it because he "throws pretty babies!"

Look through the ads in a gaited horse journal the obligatory blurb is something along the lines of "All his get are flashy movers!!"

I know a man in Utah who has specialty act horses that appear throughout the Southwest. He told me his wife was the head of the emergency department at their local hospital. His comment was, "This is cowboy country and we have a lot of horse wrecks. I asked my wife to ask them when they came in, if they could talk, what kind of horse they were riding when they wrecked. By far and away the number one horse was the Appendix Quarter Horse and way down below them on the list it was kind of spread somewhat evenly among other breeds."

When he told me that I thought back to the most severe wrecks I had had with horses - Appendix Quarter Horses.

Appendix Quarter Horses are Foundation Quarter Horses Crossed with Thoroughbreds.

Quarter Horses have been bred for energy conservation. Bred for ranch use they were bred for quick short bursts of speed to overtake a cow long enough for the cowhand to get a rope on it. They were required to do these short bursts of speed several times a day, day after day.

Thoroughbreds were bred for racing using all-out bursts of speed until they couldn't go any more. Then they needed a rest period before they could race again.

In the 50/50 Appendix you have two horses with different characteristics and at any given time you have no idea which characteristic is going to be in control of the horse. The higher the percentage of Quarter Horse in the cross the more likely the horse is going to act like a Quarter Horse. The higher the percentage of Thoroughbred in the cross the more likely the horse is going to act like a Thoroughbred.

Horses use to be bred for a particular use and if they didn't fit within the use they were sent to the mink ranch, people surely didn't breed them. Horses, before tractors became readily available, had to fit the purpose. Now, instead of breeding for purpose people breed for emotion. "Oh! Wouldn't it be neat to breed my Friesian to that Paint?? I think the combination of color and flash would be really eye-catching!!

Whether it's horses, dogs or whatever, people think they can just willy nilly design a new breed in a year. Breed characteristics have a great effect on despooking.

Opposite breed characteristic breeding can greatly compound the inherent spooking tendency in a horse.

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Physical Issues Can Affect Spooking

Physical issues, including conformation defects can affect spookiness levels.

Again, spookiness is shying away from ANYTHING you want the horse to do. Spookiness can vary from simply lifting its head when you are trying to bridle it to completely losing it and mindlessly running into something.

For example, many of the problem horses I worked with have had what are called "Hunter's Hump" or "Jumper's Bump," more accurately, "Sacroiliac Strain" of the SI Joint. This is a visible raised area or tenting in the lumbar area just between the loin and the croup. This is a very serious physical issue and I have yet to find a horse with this issue to be consistent. Horse with SI Joint injuries can be quite tractable some times and very difficult at other times. I have had people tell me that horses can recover from a Sacroiliac Strain but I personally have never seen one.

A Sacroiliac Strain, aka SS, indicates a weakness in the sacroiliac joint that can cause pain depending on what the horse is doing at any particular time. A sacroiliac strain can be caused by a number of things; pulling back when tied and suddenly being released and sitting on the ground from the backward force, being hit from behind by another horse, improper jumping and so on. Anything that impacts the horse from the front or the back can cause a [sacroiliac strain](#).

I once had someone contact me about a problem warmblood who had begun to be difficult to deal with. The owner sent me some pictures of the horse. One of them from the side showed a very obvious Sacroiliac Strain and another showing his "jumping potential" had him free jumping over a jump. The free jumping shot wasn't a free jumping shot. It was a free hopping shot, he was above the jump head high at better than a 45 degree angle. Horses are not built for jumping anyway even though they can jump over objects, but jumping horses need to flow, body to follow the head, over the jump so they land on their front hooves and "roll" off them to lead the rest of the body over. The horse at the extreme angle was destined to land hind feet first which would jam all his body weight toward his hind quarters, toward his SI joint.

The pain thresholds of horses, like humans, are all over the scale. I have seen horses who get a mosquito bite and they are on their backs in the pasture screaming, "I'M DYING!!! GET ME TO THE VET SCHOOL!!!" And, I have seen horses who were degloved or torn open from shoulder to hip come causally walking into the barn dripping blood and tissue everywhere, "Isn't it time to eat yet??"

The location of a Sacroiliac Strain is such that the area can be further stressed by the back of a saddle pressing on it, driving movement of the hind quarters, the weather, change of body angle such as stepping up into a trailer, what have you, which can cause discomfort which can produce an adverse reaction.

Bad teeth, bad bit fit, improper saddle fit, anything that can cause discomfort can cause adverse reactions in a horse.

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Interesting Spooking Causes Web Page

I came across this page that may be helpful...

<http://wheredoesmyhorsehurt.com/spooking-horses.html>

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Riders Can Cause Spookiness

Horses are very in-tuned to human body chemistry.

Your body chemistry is controlled by your mind. When you become scared or uncertain your body chemistry changes and the horse can sense the changes.

I stole this from an article I found on fear pheromones...

The smell of fear, one of the most terrible cliches of pulp fiction, is founded in fact, scientists claim today.

People can unconsciously detect whether someone is stressed or scared by smelling a chemical pheromone released in their sweat, according to researchers who have investigated the underarm secretions of petrified skydivers.

The team found that the smell of fear triggered a heightened response in brain regions associated with fear when inhaled by volunteers in a brain scanner. The research suggests that like many animal species, humans can detect and subconsciously respond to pheromones released by other people.

Notice the highlighted phrase?

When you are afraid of something, the fear pheromones cause the horse to start looking around to see where the danger is and the first strange thing it sees will create a reaction.

This is why when you have all day to load a horse you'll load it in five minutes. When you have five minutes to load a horse it'll take you all day.

How does that work?

"If Dobby doesn't load I'm gonna be late for the start of the trail ride!" Fear. Even a very slight fear changes your body chemistry and releases fear pheromones and the horse picks up on them.

Confidence is knowing that you can do whatever is expected of you.

Uncertainty increases your fear. Confidence lessens your fear. The more you learn to control your horse, and yourself, the greater your confidence will be.

That is why understanding and using herd dynamics is such an integral part of despooning your horse using a manner it understands. Herd dynamics allows you to become your horse's leader and focuses its attention on you instead of everything else around you.

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The "Let's Go Look At It" Approach

One of the most common techniques of dealing with spooking, if not the most common, is the "Let's Go Look At It" approach.

In this approach the horse is encouraged to go and look at the spook so it can go identify the spook and determine the spook is harmless no matter how long or how often it takes.

I can still remember a trail ride with a group of friends years ago where we came across a dead mattress in the woods and someone took the opportunity to walk their horse over it as a test. Every horse went easily over the mattress with the exception of a mare who absolutely refused. She spent a couple hours going around it, hopping over it, rearing and shying away from it, to simply refusing to move toward it.

The owner became convinced getting the horse to examine and walk over it was crucial to all life. I grew tired of waiting and left with some others while her more loyal friends stayed to offer support and encouragement. If I remember correctly the mare's owner finally gave up when it became obvious to her the horse was not going to quietly cross the mattress.

When you use the stop and examine everything that concerns the horse you are teaching the horse you will stop and examine everything that concerns the horse. There is always something to stop and examine. People often give me a list of things the horse has been despooned for and ask what else they can despoon for. When you use the "look and examine" method of despooning there is always something else to despoon to.

Some folks use treats as a reward for facing the spook. I view that method as the "Let's reward you for finding a spook" technique.

It is better to use the "I am the herd leader, I'll determine the value of the spook. Forget it and keep moving" method. With this method you have to teach one thing (Keep moving, I'm handling it) while with the look and examine approach you have to devote the time and energy to get the horse to accept every single thing that concerns it. This approach is unending.

The method explained in this eBook is the "Look to me whenever you are spooked by anything," approach. Teach that one thing and you're done.

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The Punishment Approach

A surprising number of people think punishing a horse for spooking is the thing to do.

I've heard of people beating their horses, withholding food, keeping them tied tacked or untacked, working them to near exhaustion and so on to punish them for spooking.

Horses are "in the now" creatures. They don't think about what happened five minutes before or think about what might happen five minutes from now. However they can and do associate past events with present occurrences.

Punishing a horse for spooking or for being concerned about their safety, if done at the moment of spooking, convinces them they were correct to be concerned for their safety.

If the punishment is done one minute after the spooking it has no idea why it is being punished. It has already spooked and has moved on looking for the next thing to spook at.

Enough said. I will now return you to the subject at hand...

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Sensing Energy Flow Disruptions

Any being with a nervous system depends on the flow of energy. Energy causes muscles to contract and release. Energy heats and cools. Energy carries sensory impulses to and from the brain.

Essentially, nervous systems are magnets with a North and South pole, like the earth. A smooth running nervous system is like a magnet held under a piece of paper sprinkled with steel filings. The filings align themselves with the lines of magnetic force produced by the magnet.

As long as there are no disruptions, the nervous system energy flows smoothly from pole to pole.

Water flowing in an unobstructed river or stream seems flat and unmoving. Objects in the flow appear to be moving with the flow with minimal disruption. An object not moving with the flow causes the water to visibly divert around it. Put enough stationary objects in the flow and you'll have what is called "rapids" or turbulence.

Turbulence in a being's energy field can greatly influence the being's behavior. If a horse's energy field has heavy turbulence due to injury it can influence the horse's spookiness. It is possible for the body to continue to protect a "long healed" injury. An unseen or undetected taut muscle or muscle group can cause the horse to be distracted.

Turbulence, or a disturbance, in a system's energy flow can be felt, or sensed, just like the turbulence in the water flow. All it takes is a little practice.

Energy sensing is an acquired individual skill that pretty much anyone can develop.

Start by vigorously rubbing your hands together for a few seconds to balance your energy. Place one hand, which we'll call the "grounding hand," anywhere on the subject to help the subject's energy flow mesh with yours. Then take the other hand and begin moving it over the subject without touching it. You don't want your sensing hand to come in contact with your subject and confuse your impressions. When I'm sensing I keep my hand about a hand thickness away from the subject.

What you are looking for is any sensation change in your sensing hand. It can be the feeling like when you hold your hand directly over a carbonated drink and the bubbles hit your hand or it can be the feeling of bubbles leaving your hand. It can feel like dull needles lightly hitting your hand. The sensation can be a sensation of increased or decreased heat in your hand. The sensation can also be a combination of the above or even something else. Sometimes the sensations will feel like they are going from your sensing hand to the subject. What you are looking for is a change in your sensing hand.

Move your sensing hand at various speeds. If you move your hand too quickly at a consistent speed over the subject you may be into and out of a disturbance before you realize it. Or if you move your hand slowly at a consistent speed you may slip over it so gradually you won't notice the change in sensation. Vary the speed of your sensing hand. Don't be afraid to go over the same spot at different speeds or directions.

In addition to the changes in your sensing hand look for changes in the subject. The skin beneath the hand may jump, a hair pattern may change or appear, the ears may flick tellingly, the horse may suddenly pay more attention or even express displeasure. What you are looking for is any indication you are over a disturbance of some sort.

It does not matter where your grounding hand is on the subject. You can even move it as needed to keep from making uncomfortable stretches. I have been doing energy sensing so long I don't even need to use a grounding hand. I can often just stand next to the subject and sense energy disruptions. I do use a grounding hand whenever possible to crank up the volume of the sensations.

When you discover areas of disturbance it is highly likely that there is some issue there. It could be a taut or damaged muscle or muscles, a skeletal issue or even an internal problem. A disturbance location helps you hone in on potential problems.

What do you do with the sensing results? Well, almost certainly the area or areas of disturbance have some effect on the horse's condition which affects its tendency toward spooking. If you discover a strong disturbance in a hip, for instance, it could indicate an issue requiring a Certified Equine Sports Massage Therapist (CESMT). A disturbance on the back could indicate a saddle fit issue. A strong disturbance on a joint or vertebra may indicate an issue requiring an equine chiropractor.

[*Linda Tellington-Jones*](#) is the only horse person in the last few thousand years to bring something new into the horse world and that is her TTouch circles. Linda teaches, among a number of other things, the effects of cellular memory in protecting the injury long after the injury has healed. Linda holds you can re-train the cells to re-examine the injury and determine whether or not the injury still needs protecting.

You can despoek a horse all day long and you may never overcome the distraction of a physical issue. The more aware you are of the horse's physical condition, the more successful you will be with it.

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The Psychology Of Fear In Horses

This discussion is the result of an email I received from a graduate student who was interested in doing a scientific study of my methods as one of her assignments. I was quite pleased to say the least because such a study would either prove or disprove my theories under stringent conditions.

The exchange was a public discussion that occurred on my *Horses discussion list* that used to be at YahooGroups before moving it to [Facebook](#).

I am beyond confident that my theories are accurate. Does that mean they are? No, of course not. Many of the things we accept as true are not. One obtains the most value from knowledge by continually testing it. While I can conclusively demonstrate my theories and concepts work, because we are dealing with horses here, it is difficult to provide a constant that will satisfy academic criteria.

For example, one would need a group of horses all exhibiting the same constant if one were to prove or disprove Marv Walker's Bonder altered fear reactions in say, spooking. In order for the "study" to be conclusive we would have to have a group of horses who spooked in the same manner, to the same degree, under the same circumstance. We would have to eliminate ALL the variables which we cannot do with horses. Then we would have to perform the bonder and then evaluate the results to come to a conclusion.

Every proposed format for the "study" has been rejected by her instructor on the basis that the constants are not constant enough. Not being a horse person, the instructor has set limits on the study that are not producible with horses. Being an academic requires there be no variables to arrive at a provable conclusion.

The study also has further problems in that the graduate student is not a native English speaker and as we know, English is a language where words, nuances and so on, while spelled the same way, have several different meanings and I'm a Cedar Savage from the swamps of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan who has been a long time resident of Georgia.

As in all the communications I receive from folks, I have made no attempts to edit the student's emails as to vernacular, spelling or expression. If anything in her writing (or mine) seems confusing it is because of the language barrier - I may not have understood what she was saying and/or she may not have understood what I was saying.

She writes:

Dear Marv,

Look I have never done this before. I might choose not an easy subject. Well the topic is giving. How to reduce aggression before it starts. I also could take the next topic. how best to pet your dog or cat? I try the horses first. I also would like to read that local article about your training methods.

I always wrote assignments, Reading articles, bla,bla. Now I have to do an experiment. And the following things we have to keep in mind is. The problem I want to investigate, the theory I want to test, and the subjects I have available. Here in New Zealand there are enough horses. It is always preferable when doing an experiment to test some theory. What is even better is if there are two theories which predict opposite or different things.

You say that your theory is that horses have rigid herd socialization actions that have genetically predisposed reactions. Can you explain this to me. anything articles related to this theory? You also say that your work is not a theory, that you have a number of concepts that fly in the face of tradition. What do you mean by that.

I think to prove a theory 10 horses would be fine, but you do not have to take them all at the same time in the round pen. I think when you have horses who do not know each other, they would like to sort out who is the leader, so there might be some kicking and bucking going. According to another natural horse lady, this would not be good horsemanship. And how would we test this bonding. How would we measure this? What signs are we looking for and how do we know that that is the bonding sign. I always want to prove something to people who have no clue, (me for example)

Another thing you said was, Fear removal or the changing of fear motivated action, aggressive or otherwise would seem to me to demonstrate the premise better. What do you mean by that? How would you recognize this.

My reply...

As I explained to the Horses list, we (you in New Zealand and us in America) have a language problem in that the things we say may not always be clear to the other, so we'll just have to keep hammering away at it until we come to a common understanding.

You have asked me a number of very time consuming questions in your last email alone and I'll be best able to answer them in a number of emails over time.

One of my interests is tracking. I was born and raised in a remote area where living off the land was an important part of dealing with a sub-standard family income. NOTHING moves on the face of the earth without leaving a mark on that earth. Those marks contain a VAST amount of information for those who study them.

For instance, if I come across your tracks in the woods and follow them for any length of time, I'll more than likely be able to tell your weight, your height, your hair color, your gender, your mood, your physical condition, how long ago you were there and enough other information to where if you are in a crowd of 100 people I could probably walk up to you and say, "You are the person who made those tracks."

There is no great trick to that. It is but a matter of observation. The more observant you are, the more you learn. When you become familiar with a mark, you know the who, what, when, where and why of the mark and NO MATTER WHERE you see that mark you know how it got there. The more marks you familiarize with, the more marks you can read.

Observation is basically how I learned horse herd dynamics. I noticed horses seem to have everything figured out when left to their own devices in a herd. Every herd member seems to know and accept its place. Every herd member seemed to be secure. Every action of every herd member seemed to have a beginning, purpose and an end. Every matter was always resolved to the acceptance of all involved. There appeared to me to be cohesiveness and harmony in the herd even though there were clearly was a constantly changing "pecking order" in the herd.

Put a human in the middle of all this and the next thing you know, you have chaos and disharmony. The unity connection is lost and much time is spent striking a happy medium trying to get the herd-dynamic horse to conform to human social dynamics.

Now I have read many articles and theories about horse interactions. I'm sorry to say that I have not kept any because, just as you said when talking about your favorite method, there seemed to be something missing. Now, years later, that something missing appears to be that many of the extremely important nuances were not fully observed by the advocates of the concepts.

In observing horses free of human influence I have noticed that nature has set up a rule that says "You can have all the individual rights you are capable of taking and keeping, but you have to honor the rights of those who are more able to do that than you are." This rule is accepted by all horses. The

horse who is the most able to take rights becomes the leader. Ranked behind that horse according to their ability to take rights are all the other herd members in what has come to be called the "pecking order."

The factor that has the greatest amount of influence in this dynamic is the DETERMINATION of the horse taking the right. If one horse is eating and a higher ranked horse comes up and says, "I'm taking this," the lower horse has ONLY two choices - it either must honor the superior horse's right or it must challenge and take the right for itself.

Horses understand, accept and are 100% comfortable with that dynamic. They know exactly what is expected of them when presented with an action - honor it or challenge it. The absence of fear is confidence. Confidence is the assurance you can handle what is expected of you. In a herd, you are expected to challenge or accept. That's it. ALL horses can do that.

The more determined a horse is to take rights, the more less determined-to-take-rights horses honor those rights. This is evidenced by the fact that some horses expend very little energy to take rights, pinned ears are often enough effort.

Now then, let's bring fear into this and how I found it can be quickly removed by mimicking this principle.

Herd dynamics really consists of a simple tenant - *take what rights you are capable of taking and honor those that you are unable to take.* We also said that when confronted you comply or you challenge. Simple enough. No value judgments, just the law of nature that in the end builds herd harmony. Every horse understands that principle and accepts it. Every horse knows it can comply with it. Every horse is 100% comfortable with it.

Since we have said that confidence is knowing what is expected of you and knowing that you can comply with it, the simple herd dynamics law builds confidence or removes fear by allowing the horse to be part of a group that greatly increases its chances of survival.

Membership in a herd means more eyes to watch for danger, more ears to listen for danger thus providing a degree of safety by allowing longer periods for sleep, eating and drinking. When the horse is fleeing danger it only has to run slightly faster than the slowest herd member. When a horse is a complying member of the herd it has greater security. Basically, others are protecting it and it is protecting others.

Now then we are at the point where the horse is operating, most of the time, in a relatively fear-free environment - a herd situation.

What is fear?

Fear is the emotion created by impending (or anticipated) danger, pain or other undesired consequence.

ALL aggression is motivated by fear but fear does not ALWAYS promote aggression. Many times fear promotes flight or spooking. While fear promotes either flight or aggression it ALWAYS promotes one of these actions. Where there is no fear, there is no spooking, there is no aggression.

To remove fear AND its effects one can resort to herd dynamics - You tell the horse, "I am taking the right to decide what you are going to do and how you are going to do it." This in effect is saying "*I* will take the responsibility of assessing danger." Since you are telling the horse to do something he INSTINCTIVELY knows how to do, the herd dynamic banishes fear.

It is not enough to verbally tell him with human words because he has no concept or understanding of human words and human thought processes. You must demonstrate to him that you have the ability to take whatever rights you want. You have to present him with the ACTIONS a rights-taking horse

(leader) would present him with AND give him the opportunity to honor or challenge those actions. If he cannot successfully challenge those actions he MUST honor them.

The procedure I use that has come to be known to so many people around the world as Marv Walker's Bonder is not a human chasing a horse around in a round pen. It is the presenting of the ACTIONS a lead horse would use to take rights from another horse who is instinctively programmed to REACT to those actions in one of two ways - challenge or comply.

Since we are humans, we can use our greater reasoning power to eliminate the horse's ability to effectively challenge our taking, leaving him with no other option but to comply.

Since the horse is genetically pre-programmed to respond to the ACTIONS it really doesn't matter whether the ACTIONS are presented by a human or (being facetious here) a goat.

Once he complies, he looks to this being for guidance. As lead horse WE determine when and where to eat, where he stands and for how long, whether we go somewhere or we stay, we decide how much energy to devote to fleeing danger, not him. As long as we continue to demonstrate we are capable of taking those rights, he will honor those rights.

In a herd situation the leader of the herd determines the herd's reaction to the fear. We see this demonstrated when one or more horses in a herd spooks and flees. If the leader of the herd does not flee, the spooked horse or horses usually circles and comes back to the herd in short order. If the leader flees, the entire herd flees and continues fleeing as long as the leader flees. The leader determines the danger. The fear assessment of the leader can be clear across the board. If a flighty individual is leader, you have a flighty herd. If the leader is not flighty, the herd will not be flighty.

Assessing fear is one of the rights we take as leader.

Of course, it is our responsibility to exercise those rights in a leader-like manner. We cannot ask him to do anything he is physically unable to do and we cannot inflict pain on him since pain is a "go away!" signal to another horse. True leaders do not want compliant followers to leave because the protection in numbers applies to us as leaders as well.

When I deal with an aggressive horse, I put it through the bonder and control its every action. Since I'm performing the actions of a lead horse and it cannot defuse those actions, it honors them. At that point it knows what to do (honor my rights) and that it can do it (follow its instincts).

I do pretty much the same thing with a spooky horse. By exhibiting leader ACTIONS to the horse it becomes my job to lead in all circumstances. It is my job to evaluate the fear. It is his job to accept my evaluation.

This establishes confidence. "I no longer have to be responsible for fear." Where there is confidence there is no fear.

True leadership allows choice. True leadership allows the follower to leave if it wishes otherwise it is a dictatorship. True leadership includes the ability to draw back those who choose to leave. And a product of choice is fear. "I have no idea what will happen to me if I do leave." The word dynamic means continual movement, we continually move forward. Leading means movement.

Another question. Once you are the herd leader, why do you have to do the bonder on a regular basis, In herd dynamics, once you are the leader, you are the leader till he/she dies? Don't you think that the horses will know after a while, to do the bonder in the round pen, because they know they can't go anywhere, but once in the open space, they "think" I don't like him as a leader, lets be silly. You could say as a teacher/ will the bonder wasn't there? Shouldn't you do the bonder in different sittings? Keep them interested/stimulated. May be that might be the case with J Millers problem. It is just a thought.

No leader is guaranteed to be the leader until he / she dies. Leaders are only leaders for as long as they can lead. In herd dynamics we have the two options at work at all times - take any rights you can take AND honor those that are taken if you cannot stop the taking (challenge).

At ANY given time a horse has the right not to accept me as leader for any reason. If I do not have the leadership ability to get him to comply with what I want, I have lost my ability to lead. Because I understand the nuances and the sequence of herd dynamics better than he does, I am able to get him to comply ANY time he changes his mind or has second thoughts. Notice I said *understand* the nuances and sequence, NOT that I respond to them as strongly as he does or that I am affected by them.

I don't really know what J Miller's (a reference to another person's "failed" first attempt bonder experience) problem is because I'm not there. I only know *I* would have no problem because the procedure is so ingrained in me that I can probably perform it with my eyes shut. As I have said, the horse has the right to change his mind, forget or whatever - this is a no-force technique. *NOTHING* I do can stop him from changing his mind if he wants to for what ever reason. All I *CAN* do is remind him using herd dynamics that I am the leader and choosing to not follow me means he is on his own. Since *he* is totally responsible for his own safety he seeks the safety of a herd.

Of course, I cheat a little and fix it so he is unable to go out and find a herd on his own. His only option is to come back into compliance. He psychologically NEEDS others to watch out for him. He cannot do the job on his own.

The bonder (or the establishment of a leader connection) does not need to be done over and over. It only needs to be done when the connection breaks or is weakening. With some horses one time lasts forever, with others you'll need touch ups. But as time goes on, the time between the touch-ups increases and the time to do the touch ups decreases. We have a 22 year old Morgan broodmare who I retrained at 19 and is as connected to me as she was the day I performed the bonder on her. We have a Holsteiner colt who needed a number of touch ups. It got to the point where merely starting toward the pen was enough to bring him back into compliance.

I recommend performing the bonder in a round pen or other small enclosure simply because it is a lot easier to control the horse in smaller areas. It is not where you perform the bonder it is how. The ACTIONS of control bring about the REACTIONS of compliance. Once you have the herd dynamic actions down you will be surprised by some of the distances they will work over. I have had horses see me coming across a pasture and start to flee (chose to not accept me as leader) and I have moved as if they were in a round pen with me and had them suddenly comply. It is not where but how.

I happened to catch a few minutes of former Libertarian Presidential candidate Mike Cloud's convention speech where he said, "Give up responsibility, you give up choice. Give up choice, you give up freedom. Give up freedom, you give up liberty." For decades we have been giving the Government responsibility for everything from education to employment. They have miserably screwed up everything they touch and we accept it - we allow others to make our choices in the mistaken assumption that we don't have to worry about anything. We have in our own minds removed fear. In return, the Government controls every facet of our lives and it is rapidly getting even worse. We unquestioningly accept their leadership.

Politics is herd dynamics on a humongous scale.

That is what we want to accomplish with our horses. The bonder allows us to go to the horse and tell it, "We know how to take care of your fears. Let us take care of it." The horse ALWAYS replies, "Okay." Hopefully, we do a better job of leading than our Government does.

Effective leadership is not domination or dictatorship.

Effective leadership always has a high degree of choice. The most effective leadership really operates under the premise that you make the choice to follow or not. However, that decision determines whether or not you reap the benefits of the leadership. If the leadership has no benefit then one either goes elsewhere (chooses not to follow) or one assumes the leadership (challenges). In other words, choosing not to follow, requires one to go out into the world of uncertainty. There is less security thus there is more fear.

It is important that I, as a being displaying lead-horse ability ACTIONS, allow the horse to continually have the option of choosing not to follow. At any time, unless I simply *MUST* physically control the horse for safety considerations, I must allow the horse freedom to say, "I'm having doubts about your leadership. I am no longer going to comply."

When the horse makes that choice regardless of what motivated it to do so, I then, as a being who is demonstrating herd leader horse ACTIONS, say to the horse, "If you are not willing to follow my lead then you must leave my area." Since herd dynamics allow me as a leader to take any rights I am able to take and enforce, I can choose what is my area. My area is as large as I want it to be and if he is in that area, he will comply (or challenge - which is difficult because it requires the horse to override a previous assumption without any indication the leadership ability situation has changed) or he must leave.

Since I as a human have greater reasoning power than he does, I can set it up to where it is impossible for him to leave my area (round pen for one, leadline or stall for another). Now, I have basically eliminated two of the three possible choices the horse has in this specific situation - leaving my area AND challenging me for leadership. Since I control his options that ONLY leaves complying. Yes, he can challenge, but since I have him under control and can defeat all of his challenges to my leadership his challenges mean nothing.

In nature, in a herd situation, there is no other option - he simply must comply in keeping with the herd dynamic. Since we are mimicking the herd situation all he has to do is say to me by his actions, "Okay, I'll comply." And instantly, just as if he was actually in a herd totally comprised of horses, EVERYTHING is all right with the world again.

While he was not complying AND I was enforcing the herd dynamic, fear arose. Namely the fear he was not going to be able to find a herd to be a part of - thus he would be more vulnerable to predation and would be denied the protection inherent in being a herd member.

Horses look to the herd leader for justification for an action. When something spooks them they follow the lead of the lead horse. If they flee and look back and she is not fleeing, they circle and rejoin the herd. If the lead mare is fleeing, they are ALL fleeing and they will go for as long and as far as she does.

Security, the removal of fear, is rooted in the herd dynamic principle.

As long as there is a clear leader, there will be clear compliance.

Now let's discuss the influence of third party fear, horse or human, in and out of the herd dynamic principle.

I am still working on this experiment, but it seems not easy. Does any one from this list have idea's about Pat Parelli's. His theory is based on positive and negative reinforcement. Thorndake one of leading theorist in psychology developed this theory So it is not something new. Experience and Genetics. As we all know, fear is a universal emotion that motivates animals to flee predators. Scientist discovered that both animals and people can develop permanent fear memories that can never be erased. A good example would be a horse bashing its head on a trailer the first time it was loaded.

This may make him difficult to load for the rest of his life. the fear memory is recorded in the amygdala, a center in the lower brain. So you need to be very careful to prevent the information of fear memories, which can interfere with training. Has anyone had a horse who was difficult to trailer load and with the bonding technique it disappeared? And if i was going to do trailer loading what do you think I should manipulate in this experiment.

Here are some of the finer points of fear.

In my experience, fear is not a constant. Depending on a number of situations fear can either be absent or it can be debilitating. I'm not sure how scientists *know* that fear memories are stored in the amygdala, and I certainly do not take issue with their belief that fear *memories* can't be erased because I'm not that all-seeing. But if they say they the *actual* fears cannot be removed, I have to take issue with that.

I have long ago lost count of the number of fears that have been removed in minutes in the horses we work with. I'm also not able to total the times I did some mighty rough things to horses before my much more enlightened times. To my knowledge, as far as I could tell as one who is far more observant than the average person thanks mainly to my tracking experiences, not one of them held it against me.

I have had horses bash their heads and worse while loading. I have had them flip upside down in the trailer and never had them hesitate to go back in afterwards. You name the fear, and the reaction to it and chances are I have had it happen. I cannot recall one of those horses being adversely affected by it for any great length of time. By the same token, I have known horses that have performed an action flawlessly for years suddenly become afraid of it for whatever reason.

Fear can be caused by a change in the situation, pain, a step missing from a sequence, a step added to a sequence, too many people around, not enough people around and what have you.

Fear can pop up at any moment. The horse looks to the herd leader for justification of the fear and the reaction to it. If the herd leader is acknowledging the fear THAT acknowledgment gives it credibility. If a horse feels fear and there is no leader to acknowledge it one way or another, the horse must deal with that fear on its own. In that case, instinct says it's better to be safe than sorry and fleeing is the only logical option.

I have had horses who were abnormally nervous (fearful) but the cause of that nervousness could not readily be pinpointed. Some horses are just born more nervous than others. Before my concepts became instinctive to me, I did the best I could with that nervousness and over time it became manageable. But it still made for some interesting moments - some of which were nearly fatal for me.

Just this afternoon while waiting in the vet's office I was reading an old National Geographic dating back to the beginning of an El Nino. One of the photographs was of a large herd of wild elephants at a dry water hole patiently standing around two guys with shovels waiting for them to dig to the water. Granted, we're talking about horses and not elephants but they were obviously not afraid of the humans. Since elephants have extensive experience with poachers they have fear of humans, but in this case, that fear was obviously gone.

We have a 24 year old Morgan Park Saddle/Harness Show Broodmare here (at the time this was written) that we have had practically all of her life. Most of the time we owned her she was at the trainer's in New York and he was totally paying all her bills and making sure he did us every favor he could to keep her there. She was what is called a "ribbons horse." He took her to every show he went to even if he wasn't planning on showing her. If his paid training horses weren't doing real well, he'd tack her up and enter her in a bunch of classes. If he was still on her or in the cart at the end of the classes, if he didn't win he would place very high. The ribbons, rosettes and platters would go on his

stall drapes - hey, ribbons are ribbons when you're a trainer at a show and visitors don't care about a lot of details.

When we stopped showing the Morgans and pensioned them off to live out their lives in the manner they had earned, she came back home at 17. The trainer warned us to not let ANYONE ride the horse. When the trainer's brother handed me her leadline as she got off the trailer he said, "I rode that horse, once." My partner at the time and her husband were against me riding her. They said respectively, "It is like riding a motorcycle with no brakes" and "It was a religious experience, I said, 'I have made a grave tactical error, get me off and I will never ask for anything again.'"

She was dangerous to be around and to lead. You had to be on your toes at all times. She was incredibly spooky and extremely nervous. If she was spooked, she'd head in the direction she was facing regardless of who or what was there. If she got loose in the barn and started up the aisle there was no blocking the aisle, you WOULD be run over.

After a couple years of having her around here I got real tired of her antics and took her to the round pen just to put some better leading manners on her.

It was also the day that years of study SLAMMED into place. Linda Tellington-Jones had demonstrated to me that there was a different way of dealing with horses than the "I'm going to ride you even if it kills the both of us" way I'd followed. The way I dealt with horses prior to watching Linda is often referred to as the "cowboy way." Since Linda I threw out every bit of horse handling information that didn't meet four criteria; (1.) It had to work EVERY time I used it, (2.) It HAD to be safe for me, (3.) It HAD to be safe for the horse, (4.) The horse HAD to be better after than before. I read and observed with those four points in mind.

I had just finished Monty Roberts book and as I read the snippets of horse stuff buried in the pages of his paternal angst, I thought to myself, "Herd dynamics - little too mysterious and smoke screeny, but it's herd dynamics none the less." In the entire book I only found two short forgotten phrases of value to me - the justifying ear and the processing mouth - that I'd also heard discussed while sitting at the feet of Linda Tellington-Jones. When I read that someone else had noticed those two things I had noticed many times before I remembered Linda's words and I instantly ****KNEW**** that I could repeat the successes that earned me an area reputation for "getting inside the horse's head" with ANY horse in mere minutes instead of the months and years it normally took. The focusing on these two phrases and the recalling their appearances in my concepts made everything fall into place.

I had been using herd dynamics for years before that and they had always produced the same results they produce now - it just took me longer to accept them. I'd just keep working the horse until it was SCREAMING at me, "YOU MORON!!! WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO TO TELL YOU I'VE GOT THE PROGRAM?????" At that point I'd always tell the horse, "Glad to see you finally came along." It wasn't the horse that was taking so long, it was me. I needed evidence of success that was so strong only a moron would overlook it. And that day, I realized the moron overlooking it was me.

I took Dee to the round pen to test my conclusions. With no physical connection at all, in less than five minutes I had a totally different horse, NO SPOOKINESS. NO NERVOUSNESS. Just quiet, attentive, patient, respectful, compliant standing beside me.

I thought to myself, "I can ride this horse." I went and got my saddle and put it on her just like I'd been doing it all her life and she never moved or showed the least bit of concern. I had the saddle on her and I got on her. Not the first problem, not one bit of concern. She was as quiet and obedient as one could possibly ask.

(I use the present tense here because this was written before she passed away of old age. - Marv Walker) She is my all time trail horse. She is an absolute delight to ride. I have fallen asleep on her

and woke up miles down the trail. She is no trouble to handle or be around. Now when she "spooks" she spreads her feet out for balance in case we have to leave and she asks my her actions, "What are we going to do about that?" I tell her we're going to ignore it and she goes right on by. Before, she would have just taken off.

The things she feared that made her dangerous she no longer fears. And if she has any memory of her past fears, I simply cannot tell it by her actions.

The other day we had a farm visitor ask for a demonstration. Most horse trainers don't have much time for their own horses and we are no different. We have a 20 year old TB brood mare that's been here for about a year. Extremely nervous and fearful, spooky, low horse on the pecking order. Half hour later; different horse - stunned observer. Yesterday she was booking up the aisle heading out of the barn. I signaled her to stop and she did. She stood there patiently and compliantly until I released her. Different horse.

Rather than trying to find a number of horses with a common fear to test the theory, it may be easier to take horses with ANY fear reaction. Identify and assess the fear. Then put the horse through the herd dynamic we call the Bonder. Then reassess the fear at the successful conclusion of the bonder.

I do not pre-screen horses for my clinics. I will take on ALL problems as long as participant safety is not compromised. If fear is a problem it can be overcome with the use of herd dynamics faster than any other method I have seen or tried.

Horse after horse after horse after horse. I have seen that bonder / herd dynamics procedure dramatically change horses. I have had horses with pretty much every problem you can think of come to my clinics. If it is not a physically rooted problem, if it is a fear or respect issue the bonder flat-out makes a difference.

Is it infallible? No. Of course not. We're dealing with horses and humans here. And the connection must be a two way street. There is a constant stream of communication going back and forth - the horse tells you how it feels, you tell it how to deal with those feelings. You must exhibit leadership qualities. You must display leadership actions.

Lets say this, in your theory, you (the human) take over the "lead" in the herd. Right. As you said horses have genetically predisposed reactions. Horses flee when they have fear. Flee is genetically predisposed. Right. Even the lead horse will flee, when there is a situation that he is frighten off, so all the others horses will follow.

Yes, fear is genetically predisposed. The horse's reaction to fear is to flee. In a herd situation the herd members look to the leader for its reaction. If the leader has no fear, it will not flee. If the leader does not flee, the herd doesn't flee. Since horses have little reasoning ability, it does not take much fear for the lead horse to flee. But if the leader does not flee, neither do the others.

If I as a human, with greater reasoning power, am able to mimic lead horse *actions*, I can take over the lead in the herd. If I have the lead, my human reasoning does not fear the same things a horse does. I will not flee. The horses looking to the leader (me, who will not flee) will accept my assessment the fear is groundless. This lead horse (me) will NOT flee and all the others will follow my lead which is to NOT flee. Even in nature, in totally horse-composed herds, there are degrees of fear thresholds among the leaders.

Time and time again, I have demonstrated how this works by spooking a horse in the round pen after its handler has performed the procedure. Invariably, the horse puts its owner between me and it.

Horses are EXTREMELY intuitive. There is a world of difference to a horse between a leader who says, "That is nothing to be concerned with" and a peer who says, "Silly horse, what's the matter with

you anyway? Why are you doing that?" The leader leads, the peer (and many people are no more than peers to their horses) questions.

So how can you take over the position of the leader/ what is genetically predispose to flee when having fear. Can you state that you can be the leader of a herd and with your bonding techniques, the genetically predisposed flee, would disappear when a horse becomes frightened?.

One becomes a leader by leading. In the case of horses, they determine leaders by ACTIONS. Using herd dynamics, the way a lead horse would, shows leadership ability to the other horses. As long as I exhibit that ability the horse will follow. And it will follow me when I ignore the spook.

Since horses are genetically predisposed to react to the *actions* of a rights-taking horse in one of two ways, challenge or comply, all I have to do is to be able to perform the *actions* and enforce them by controlling every movement the horse makes until it reacts genetically and complies with my leadership.

The bonder allows me to do that. In the enclosure I absolutely control, at liberty, what the horse does. It moves in the direction I want it to go until I tell it to either stop or go in the other direction. If I want it to speed up or slow down, it does. I usually prefer that the horse go slower as opposed to going faster, because it is not the speed that does the connecting, it is the control of the actions a leader would exhibit in the herd. The horse sees leadership actions, even though I obviously am not a horse, and because he cannot make that distinction he reacts to the actions and complies. So far, of all the horses I have used this on, ALL have complied. So far, it has not failed me. It has worked with marked differences in speed and ease, but it has ALWAYS worked.

Also outside of a round pen. An good experiment would be. To get a group of wild horses, find the leader, do the bonding, in the round pen. He will except you as a leader. Put you, who would be the leader of the herd with the "ex-leader" back in the wild. Create a natural situation were they normally will flee, but you as the leader doesn't flee, so the ex leader doesn't flee either, so the whole herd doesn't flee. Does that make sense?

You are assuming that the leader is a he. My observations do not bear that out. The mares tend to be the herd leaders in herds. They are the ones who take the rights from the other horses and are able to keep the rights they take. The stallions are responsible for reproduction and genetic purity - THEY drive genetically inferior rivals from the herd and keep other genetically inferior stallions away. If they are challenged, the stronger will usually prevail - sometimes BOTH are mortally wounded.

If we had a group of wild horses and I found the leader, I could indeed become the leader of that "leader." But she would just drop one place in the leadership line up. I would have to demonstrate to all the other horses that I am the leader as well. Herd leadership is a constantly changing dynamic, if you do not lead, you are a follower. You must be able to take rights from ALL of the other herd members at will. because I do not have the speed and stamina of a horse, I have to demonstrate leadership to them individually under a controlled environment.

If I have two horses that I have demonstrated my leadership ability to they will consider me the leader. Right now, I interact with seven horses and two foals on a regular basis. They consider me to be the leader when we are together. I have not dealt with a bigger herd than that at any one time.

But these are horses I have worked with individually. It is not a herd of previously undealt with horses as you have suggested for the test. If I was a human with horse speed and stamina, I would have the entire herd of previously undealt with horses following me in less than a half hour.

When you talk about effective leadership in your last e-mail I hope you were talking about leadership in regard to horses. If you meant humans I would disagree with you? You stated" the most effective

leadership really operates under the premise that you make the choice to follow or not True, but society is not based on honesty, if I decided not to follow a leader I might lose my job, my career, society forces you to follow.

Effective leadership whether by humans or horses allows choice. You can choose to follow or not to follow. If you choose not to follow as a horse, you have to be able to make it on your own or you pay a high price. If you choose not to follow as a human you must be able to make it on your own or you will pay a high price. Honesty, societal or otherwise, has nothing to do with making the choice. Fear does. As you yourself said, if you choose to not follow, you might lose your job, your career. That's fear.

You stay where you have less fear. THAT is why people don't easily leave unpleasant situations (flee). The fear you know is less than the fear of the unknown. THAT is how herd dynamics work. There is less fear in the herd so you seek the safety of the herd to lessen fear. Eons and eons and eons of herd genetics make herd animals understand herd dynamics.

If I establish a herd relationship with a horse or horses they will be FAR LESS LIKELY to leave the herd security I provide when spooked.

This "discussion" is REALLY bringing my concepts into razor sharpness for me. Now if I can just begin to convey a little part of that sharpness to others.

This afternoon I took a 19 year old fear riddled TB mare into the pen at the request of someone who wanted to see me work. And in less than half an hour she said, "If you have a fan club, I want to be the President." And MOST of that time was explaining to her how it worked. The even clearer understanding of the concepts brought about by this discussion made the process almost instinctive to me.

The horses that are the hardest to work with at clinics are those horses that people just want to have a little better connection with. Both horse and human get along very well with each other but the human is always seeking for ways to improve a highly satisfying relationship. In these cases any improvements are difficult for the uninitiated to see. Changes need to be remarkable to be seen.

I love it when a highly nervous, agitated or aggressive horse is brought in, They make me look REALLY good - the changes are so fast and dramatic people stand there in disbelief.

You asked in another email about hormonally unbalanced or mentally ill horses - why I don't allow them at my clinics and how to identify them. It isn't that I don't allow them at my clinics, I said my techniques are not intended to be used on them. They have mental abnormalities that prevent them from recognizing the actions of a lead horse. A mentally ill horse would be one who exhibits erratic behavior in an inconsistent manner regardless of circumstances - when you see one you'll know it, there will be no doubt. A hormonally unbalanced horse will have an extreme Jekyll and Hyde reactions to consistent situations AND has been diagnosed with hormonal deficiencies.

I would make the decision as to whether or not to allow them based on a discussion with the owner. If I felt the horse met the criteria, I would not allow the horse to attend the clinic SOLELY for safety reasons. I *WOULD* work with the animal privately.

In the case of the elephants: Water is necessary for survival. So the elephants have a choice. The inborn knowledge that they must have water to survive is a stronger force than the learned fear of humans.

The Morgan, you said, was around your barn for a couple of years before you applied your bonding with her. Do you think it would have worked as well if you had tried it as soon as she arrived from the trainer? My thinking is that even though her behavior did not reflect it, on an unconscious level she

was absorbing the atmosphere of your barn and your non-aggressive behavior toward your horses. In other words, she had reached a comfort level so that when you asked her to change her behavioral responses she felt non-threatened enough to comply.

When one sets about to define a problem in order to set about resolving it, it helps to refine it as tightly as you can. The primary focus of this discussion is to analyze whether or not the herd dynamics remove fear and if it does, how it appears to do that.

Whether the elephants (or horses, dogs or humans) have a choice or not is not germane to the discussion of whether or not fear **CAN** be overcome. The point is, a primal fear, the fear of man, was overcome. The purpose of this discussion is how horse herd dynamics overcomes fear - whatever kind it is.

I do not have any idea what goes on in a horse's subconscious as far as the remembrance of fear goes. I'm taking issue with the statement that **subconscious** fear, always has an effect even though the fear has apparently been conquered as evidenced by the horse's non-reaction when exposed to the fear after the conquering. True, the fear may surface again in off guard moments, but it does not *ALWAYS* surface when faced again.

For instance, Dee simply does not exhibit *ANY* fear in many situations where she went ballistic before. She shows no sign that she is giving these situations *ANY* fear value. And I can pinpoint the exact minute that change occurred and what action brought about that change. It is as though a cleaver separated the two behaviors. It is that sharp and that abrupt.

Now let's discuss the possibility of becoming more comfortable with the barn routine as time went on and that of acquired comfort having a marked effect on her new security. If Dee was the only nervous horse I worked with, I'd have to say, "I spose that's possible." However, she is not the only horse with this condition that I have worked with. I have worked with nervous horses on their own turf and on strange turf, such as at clinics and here at the farm. The results are consistent, no matter where the herd dynamics are applied.

The horses do not comply because of any atmosphere acclimation or as a result of feeling less threatened because they have become accustomed to their surroundings. They comply because they are presented with actions that they are genetically programmed to respond to. Actions that promote harmony and unity. Where there is harmony and unity, there is comfort.

I have said on many occasions, I *REALLY* prefer a clinic *FULL* of nut cases than I do one full of minor problem horses or those the owner merely wants a better connection with. The more fear-crazed the horse, the better I like it. *THOSE* are the ones that will make chins drop to the ground and heads shake in disbelief at the speed at which the dramatic changes occur.

They are desperate for comfort and security. The instant they are presented with the bonder scenario in the manner I have laid out, they start falling into line because they instinctively recognize what is going on and they *KNOW* what is expected of them. There are no surprises - it is a familiar action they, and their ancestors for millions of years, have been through so many times they know what is at the end of it - comfort and security.

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Spooking In The Herd

If we closely watch a herd of horses we can see the herd responds to a spook in one of two ways.

There is the partial spook. This is where a few members of the herd spook and take off. They go a short ways and when they realize the rest of the herd is still back where they left from, they circle around and come back to the herd with a "just practicing" air about them.

Then there is the full herd spook where every member of the herd spooks as a unit.

The difference between the two reactions depends on the reaction of the herd leader.

In the partial spook where a part of the herd spook they look to see where the herd leader is. If the herd leader is still back at ground zero munching away they come back to the herd leader as soon as they realize the herd is not with them.

In the whole herd spook the whole herd is in flight and they continue to go as long as the herd leader goes.

The herd leader has determined the seriousness of the spook and the herd follows.

The herd leader evaluates all spooks.

Since the herd leader evaluates all spooks and the horse depends in a large part on the leader's self-preservation, the horse becomes even more spookier when away from the herd and the herd leader.

We can become the horse's spook evaluator by becoming the horse's herd leader. We can become the horse's herd leader by using herd dynamics and presenting the horse with leadership actions.

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The "Pecking Order"

All comfort, all peace, all security is found in the herd.

The herd does not exist for benefit of the herd. The herd exists for the benefit of the individual. The horse has more time to eat, drink and sleep when in the herd than it does when it is alone. There are more ears and eyes in the herd searching for danger so its muzzle can be on the ground more. It can sleep more because others are watching. When you are in a herd there are more opportunities to escape predators because of numbers alone. The more members of the herd there are the greater the chances the predator will grab another member.

I tell the old story of two hikers encountering a bear. The one hiker sits down and begins changing his hiking boots for running shoes and his partner sneers, "You can't outrun a bear!" The shoe changer replies, "I don't have to outrun the bear, I only have to outrun you."

You don't have to be the fastest horse in the herd, you only have to be the second slowest. The more members in the herd the more likely there will be one just a little weaker or slower than you. Predators are not stupid. They go for the easiest prey. If you are alone you get the full attention and efforts of the predator no matter how weak or strong, fast or slow you are.

The individual benefit of the herd comes from a principle we refer to as the "pecking order" or herd dynamics. This principle simply stated is: Take all the rights you can take and honor all the rights you can't take.

Horses listen to the WIII.FM (WhatIsInIt.ForMe) radio station. They are only concerned for themselves. Take a herd of horses and throw one flake of hay among them. One of them will tell the others, "Mine!" and it will do what it has to do to control the flake. All the others react accordingly. They honor that right or they challenge and take the right away - the "pecking order" in action.

This dynamic places the horse in the order of their abilities. The horse with the most ability to take and keep rights is what we refer to as the "alpha" horse. The horse with the least ability to take and keep rights is what is referred to as the "omega" or bottom horse. All other herd members fall somewhere in between.

All the horses accept the "pecking order" and their positions. Why? Because it is better to be the lowest ranked horse in the herd than to be outside of the herd because all comfort, all peace, all security is in the herd.

The pecking order is fluid and positions can change in a moment. A horse leaving or arriving in the herd for whatever reason changes the order. Illness, injury or age can change the ranking. We have a mare on the farm who will very quickly become the leader, or very close to it, of any herd she is placed in.

A horse needs a herd leader. If one is not available it steps up and takes over the job. You and your horse are a herd. If you do not lead, it will. One of the leader's jobs is to evaluate spooks. Horse's can't afford to take too much time analyzing spooks. Its tendency is to spook first, analyze later.

Horses are genetically pre-disposed to pecking order actions. When presented with pecking order actions they must honor or challenge them. If they are unable to successfully challenge the actions they will honor them.

All peace, all comfort, all security is in the herd.

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Your Rank In The "Pecking Order"

Since all peace, all comfort, all security is found in the herd it seems strange the herd operates on a dynamic that ranks the herd members on their individual abilities to be self-serving. This dynamic is what we refer to as the "pecking order." The pecking order has one principle: Take all the rights you can and honor all those you can't. Depending on your abilities and determination you can be the horse no one messes with or the horse everyone messes with or any horse in between.

If you are a horse, your welfare depends on being in the herd - at any ranking in the pecking order. Little else matters other than being in the herd no matter where you fall in the ranking.

When you are alone every moment you are distracted from danger search while lowering your head to graze or drink is a moment when your ears and eyes will be below the horizon and out of sentry duty. Every bit of vigilance is your completely your responsibility. Every moment you are distracted is a moment of danger. It falls to you to be 100% aware.

Unless you are in a herd.

In a herd there are more ears, eyes and noses busily looking for trouble. The more horses in the herd the more watchers there are. In a herd there are more opportunities to eat, drink and sleep. In a herd you don't have to be the fastest or healthiest to survive you only have to be the second fastest or healthiest. There are more victims to choose from in the herd. When you are alone the predator's attention and interest is zeroed in on one - you and you alone.

Nothing is more important than being in a herd. It is better being at the bottom of the pecking order in a herd than being on the top of the list alone.

However, it is better for you all around to be at the top of the pecking order, also known as the herd

leader, in a herd than anywhere else. You don't bite the leader, you don't get in the leader's space, you don't disrespect the leader and the leader gets the best food, water and shade. Everyone below works out who gets what's left.

Horses are very quick pecking order placers. If they are with a herd of horses or a group of people they very quickly pick up on who falls where in the ranking. If you have a family of six and a horse, the horse will very quickly be able to tell who is the actual leader in the group. The horse will challenge the leader if it feels it can take the right of herd leadership away from the leader.

When you are with a horse you are either the leader or the follower. If you are the leader you control the horse. If you are the follower the horse controls you. It's much better to control the horse. In order to best control the horse you must know and understand how herd dynamics work and how to use them.

A horse becomes the herd leader or "alpha" by telling the other horses what to do and making them do it until all the other horses accept its leadership by virtue of the fact they can do nothing to stop it.

In other words, a horse becomes herd leader by giving the others a series of commands it knows beyond a shadow of doubt it can get the other horses to obey until they say by their actions, "She is acting like a herd leader and we are acting like herd followers. Therefore, she is the herd leader and we are herd followers." If no herd member is able to challenge and defeat her commands they must honor the commands and her leadership. As long as she is able to take the rights she will be the leader. The herd leader is almost always a "she."

Some of the commands she may give are: "My food, get away;" "I want that spot, move!"

Here is a little known fact...

The herd leader doesn't have to be a "she." The herd leader doesn't even have to be a horse. The horse is not genetically pre-programmed to respond to horses performing leadership actions. The horse is genetically pre-programmed to respond to the leadership actions, I repeat, the horse is genetically programmed to respond to leadership actions regardless of who or what is performing them.

I have had people tell me there is no way the horse accepts me as a herd leader and responds to me exactly as it would a horse. It knows I am not a horse. I'm willing to concede it may not view me as one of the equines it associates with every day but I'm not willing to adamantly say the horse knows that it is a horse. Horses don't have mirrors.

I have seen a good number of animals confuse themselves with other species. When we raised exotic parrots from eggs and hand fed them they often distanced themselves from other parrots and obviously considered us to be their kind. I've seen goose decoys the size of VWs lure in geese. I've seen ostriches mistake bent over people holding plungers and brooms for ostriches. I read a very interesting paper on moose reacting to the size of antlers carried by researchers researching the moose pecking order. Cats raising baby bunnies and on and on.

If a dog is trained to present the leadership actions the horse will honor them. Many times I have taken young children into the enclosure with me, told them what to do and in mere minutes had the horse accept them as leader. No where is this more obvious than in my DVD [*Focusing The Unfocused Horse*](#).

We can insert ourselves into the herd and become the herd leader simply by presenting leadership actions to the herd that we know beyond a shadow of a doubt we can get the horses to obey until they say by their actions, "S/he is acting like a herd leader and we are acting like herd followers. Therefore, s/he is the herd leader and we are herd followers." If no herd member is able to challenge and defeat our commands they must honor the commands and our leadership. As long as we are able to take the rights we will be the leader. If the horses are able to challenge and defeat our attempts to take rights,

we won't be the leader.

You can place yourself in the horse's pecking order ranking very easily.

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The Why And How Of Becoming A Horse's Leader

When we observe a herd of horses we see there is one horse who is the herd leader and all the other horses look to that horse to evaluate a spook. When one or more herd members spook they go until they realize the herd leader is not spooking as well then they circle around and rejoin the herd with a "Just practicing!" air. If the herd leader spooks all the other herd members spook as well and go as long as the herd leader goes.

Our goal is to become the herd leader and not spook at anything and to shorten the length of time from the time a threat is perceived to the time the spooked looks to us and accepts our evaluation of the spook.

We become the herd leader by using exactly the same actions a lead horse uses. We give the horse a series of directions we know beyond a shadow of a doubt we can get the horse to obey without touching it until it says by its actions, "This being is giving me a series of directions and I'm obeying them. Therefore, this being must be a leader and I must be a follower."

There are only a few commands I can give the horse and make it obey without touching it. This works out fine because the horse uses relatively few commands to become a herd leader as well. Her commands are basically, "Mine! Get away!" My commands are, "Go in that direction," "Speed up," "Slow down," "Stop," and "Go in the other direction." I know beyond a shadow of a doubt I can get the horse to obey every one of those commands without touching the horse. The horse will respond to the herd leader actions in short order.

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The Herd Leadership Procedure

It has been a good number of years since I put into print, on the Internet, the herd dynamic procedure I use with every horse I work with. I wracked my brain at the time for a catchy name to call it with little success. I finally decided to temporarily call it "The Bonder" for the time being until I came up with a better name because that's what it did - it bonded horse and human. In no time it was going around the world known as "Marv Walker's Bonder" and there was no way the name could be changed after that. Thousands of downloads later it is still "Marv Walker's Bonder."

"Marv Walker's Bonder" is a beginning to end text bonder procedure scenario available by sending any email to Bonder@MarvWalker.com. An auto-responder returns a reply in a few moments with the procedure's current URL and some things I want people to know. The procedure is also available in this ebook as well as being extensively explained and demonstrated in my [Mentally Connecting With The Adult Horse DVD](#).

I put every horse I work with through the procedure as soon as possible. I don't give the horse any time after arriving to get used to the farm and the new situation. I show the horse it will be 100% comfortable here and it will know exactly how to get along here because all I expect from it is to be a horse and realize that I have leadership abilities. This gives the horse a sense of place from the very beginning.

The horse knows where it fits in and is confident it knows it can do what is expected of it. This confidence eliminates fear.

The procedure is best performed in a small enough enclosure to control the horse yet large enough to keep the horse away from you until it is giving you the respect a leader deserves. Once the herd dynamic concept is understood it can be performed in any size enclosure under any circumstances.

The ideal enclosure to perform the procedure in is a round pen about 45 feet across. Any smaller and you stand a chance of the horse getting to you and catching you with a kick as it goes by before it accepts your leadership. Any larger and it increases the amount of moving you have to do to control the horse. I used to recommend a 60 foot RP until I actually used one at a clinic. I thought it was huge. I discovered the one I was using was 45 feet when I got back home and measured it.

If you don't have a round pen you can make do. I have used paddocks, arenas and other enclosures. I have made small enclosures out of large ones by using ropes, bales, trailers, jump poles, barrels and so on. You can set barrels in the corners of small rectangular, boxy enclosures to keep the horse from hanging up in them, however learning how to move the horse out of any corners and learning how to anticipate corner problems only increases your leadership skills.

While the procedure may be performed in a round pen it is not, repeat, not traditional round penning used by many clinicians, trainers and horse people.

Traditional round penning usually seeks to get to the mind of the horse by controlling the body to the point the horse is seeking relief and stumbles upon the desired action. As one well known guru's book says, he "likes to see a little sting in the lungs." You often see sweating and heavily breathing horses in traditional round penning as they go round and round.

The Bonder herd dynamics procedure controls the body of the horse by immediately controlling the mind. Everything is done as quietly and calmly as possible. Breaks in the procedure, even postponements, are encouraged for re-vamping if either the horse or the human become confused, sweaty, or stuck on a point. There are no hills to die on and the procedure can always be restarted at a later time for any reason.

Traditional round penning, and training in general, is intended to set the horse up to "make the wrong thing hard and the right thing easy." The herd dynamics, leader / follower, bonder mindset is to NOT monkey with the wrong thing at all but to set the horse up going right from the beginning.

The Bonder herd dynamics procedure establishes a herd leader / follower relationship between horse and human. This is the groundwork for despooning the horse by having the horse look to the leader to evaluate spooks. We want the horse to "come to" the leader when spooked.

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How The Herd Dynamics / Bonder Procedure Is Done

NOTICE: THIS PROCEDURE IS *NOT* INTENDED FOR USE WITH MENTALLY ILL, OR AGGRESSIVELY RANK, OR HORMONALLY UNBALANCED MARES WITH OVARIAN CYSTS. THESE HORSES, AND PERHAPS SOME OTHERS, REQUIRE EXTREMELY EXPERIENCED HANDLING AND TREMENDOUS CAUTION.

IF YOU PARTICIPATE IN EQUINE ACTIVITIES YOU *WILL*** BE INJURED AT SOME POINT, AND THOSE INJURIES CAN RANGE FROM MINOR CUTS, ABRASIONS AND/OR CONTUSIONS TO DEATH.**

AGAIN, IT IS NOT A QUESTION OF *IF* YOU WILL BE INJURED BUT *WHEN*

YOU ACCEPT ALL RISKS INHERENT IN THE USE OF THIS PROCEDURE. THIS PROCEDURE WORKS SO SMOOTHLY YOU MAY BE LULLED INTO A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY. ***ALL*** HORSES ARE SUBJECT TO UNPREDICTABLE OR UNEXPECTED REACTIONS

This procedure is now fully explained and demonstrated in these, ["How To Mentally Connect With Any Horse"](#), ["How To Mentally Connect With Young Immature Horses"](#) and other DVDs found at my [Mary Walker DVD Listings](#)

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Horse and human of one mind with the horse willing to be the mirroring partner."

Establishing a mental connection with a horse is absolutely necessary for bringing out the best in both horse and human. The more mentally connected they are to each other (or as we humans like to say, "bonded"), the better the communication between the two. In a mentally connected relationship the constant exchange of information overcomes fear, confusion, and anxiety. When these barriers are dealt with, rapid progress can be made because the time wasted on the "just doesn't seem to get it" obstacles is spent far more productively. Since a mentally connected relationship improves as it ages, camaraderie and learning speed increases.

"Bonding," to use that term for an awesome mental connection, is an area of differing opinions both in what it is and how to achieve it. Some point to their horse's nickering to them, walking up to them, hanging around them while they are in the horse's area and the fact that they "just feel such a rapport" with the horse as proof their horse has bonded to them or is in the process of bonding to them. Many feel if they are able to get along with the horse with a minimum of hassle they have bonded.

I believe a VERY HIGH percentage of horses are not "broke." Most horses do not have a bonded sense of partnership with humans. This is evidenced in any number of handling and training problems. You may be able to get the horse to accomplish all sorts of things and it still might not be "broke." If a horse has disrespect issues (moving into your space, improper leading, moving away from saddling, bridling or grooming in the apparent absence of injury, barn sour, herd bound) for instance, it is not "broke." You may be able to fling the horse to victory or do any number of things with it, but it is not "broke." Most horse problems I deal with are the result of a horse not being "broke."

How can you end up being able to get a horse to the point where you can ride it and accomplish things with it and still not have it "broke?" I'd have to say it's success. Success is the number one reason, as I see it, that so many people have problems with horses. How can that be? Well, we start a horse on Monday and he lets us put the bridle and saddle on and even lets us get on him and go twice around wherever. Success. On Tuesday we start teaching him to steer and he goes around fairly well. Success. By Saturday, we're all the way up to proper leads, canter departs, roll backs, what have you. Success.

We get rolling along on our wave of success. Sometimes luck holds out and we're able to get all the way to the ribbons or wherever else we're heading. Many times our success turns on us when we least expect it. We may be going around a barrel or doing a shoulder-in and wham! We then get focused in on the turn or shoulder-in as the culprit when in actuality the initial biting "success" months before may be the problem. The horse accepted the bit under optimum conditions only to have it fall apart down the line. He was never "broke" to the bit...he accepted it but he wasn't "broke."

"Bonding," or connecting with a horse, works the same way. Just because a horse *appears* to be bonding doesn't mean it is. For the purposes of this discussion, I define "bonding" as that state where both horse and human are of one mind with the horse willing to be, and content to be, the mirroring partner. Expanding further, it should include what I call the "mother mentality." The horse should ACT like a mother. Not BE a mother, ACT like a mother in that a mother pretty much tolerates anything a kid does. The kid can climb on her, play, do whatever and the mother pays no attention...until the kid says, "MOM!" I want the horse to tolerate whatever I do (within reason of course) and only give me his attention when I mention his name by giving him a direction or cue. Since horse human relations consist of streams of directions and cues, he gives me his attention constantly.

When I can do whatever I want to the horse short of hurting it or demanding it accept something it is unable to do, the horse has "mother mentality." When the horse has mother mentality toward another being, it is bonded, or connected to that being.

Bonding can be predictably, rapidly and verifiably accomplished in less than an hour with practically any horse by utilizing eons-old horse herd dynamics in a psychological pattern that unifies the horse with its herd or human acting as the herd leader would act. The horse willingly gives its compliance in return for a sense of place and belonging - a productive member of the herd.

For eons and eons horses have been herd animals. In nature, the horse MUST be part of a herd to survive for any length of time. In the herd is his life. There is safety in numbers. He has more eyes and ears available to watch for predators. He can sleep and eat more because predator watch is shared by other herd members. If a predator comes, he only needs to be faster and warier than the less capable members of the herd. If he is alone, he is as good as dead when danger threatens.

In return for this security, he must comply with a very rigid scenario - either lead or follow. When presented with the actions of a leader, the horse genetically has two options - become the leader or become the follower. When we use herd dynamics and exhibit leader actions, the horse reacts to the leader actions.

Because we have greater reasoning ability than the horse, we can set up a situation where he has only one reaction when presented with leader actions and that is following the leader's lead. If he chooses to comply quickly, good. If he chooses to try to become the leader we defuse that by refusing to comply with his actions. If we don't comply, he is not a leader. Since a horse is either a leader or he's not, and we deny him compliance, he is left with one option - since he was unable to become leader, he must become a follower.

In any relationship there always has to be a leader. The one who is the most capable of making decisions must be the leader or confusion reigns. Since the horse is incapable of making beneficial decisions in the human world, the human must be the leader. In order for the human to lead the horse, the human must be able to communicate with the horse. There must be a flow of information between the two beings. This flow opens up wide avenues for both parties. Both parties become one unit. When they become one unit they are bonded.

What follows is my herd dynamics bonding scenario. It is a narration of the results I get 100% of the time. This bonder is, in essence, the sequence I use to develop initial bonding. There are some variables in the length of time between stages and how the horse acts between the stages, but, so far it has not failed to produce bonding and a strong willingness toward submissive cooperation in a VERY short time for me.

This narration is ONLY the bonder which is but a small part of the Marv Walker Mind Meeting Mind / Awareness Horsemanship techniques I use. The bonder may be a small part of what I do but it is the foundation on which everything else I do with horses is based.

While the ideal enclosure for this procedure is a round pen, it is NOT a round pen exercise. Any enclosure large enough to keep the horse away from you until it shows you the respect you want and small enough to be able to control the horse will do. The object is to control the body by controlling the mind, NOT control the mind by wearing down the body. Ideally, the slower and calmer you can perform the procedure the better.

There are many extras I would do in a clinic. There is quite a bit of theory involved in what I do. Nothing complicated or involved, just fairly intensive. I cover pre-evaluating the horse. I teach evaluating what the horse is like before we begin bonding so that we have something concrete to compare to afterwards. We look at the shape of its head, facial features, eyes, length of mouth, position and location of ears, how it is moving, its apparent mental state and so on. All of these factors have a bearing on the way the horse is going to go through the bonding process...not whether or not it WILL go through, but HOW. Some horses take longer to between the stages, some are more cooperative and so on.

My former partner in the horses, as well as in a couple of other businesses, Kellie Sharpe, likes to tell folks to be aware of tension signs before you begin the procedure...expanded eyes, tightened lips, drawn up stomach, jerky movements, rapidly flicking ears, quick blinks, etc...and to look to these areas for signs of acceptance...eyes soft, lips "flopping", stomach swaying to the stride, smooth movements, steady ears, etc...to help you gauge your progress.

This bonder, as presented, is intended for horses who have reached a somewhat mature mental state. It is not for weanlings or babyish acting young ones. Those animals are susceptible to the bonder as well, but require a different bonder application. Foals and yearlings rely on throwing themselves on the mercy of more dominant horses. They communicate this action by popping their gums which is saying in effect, "I'm just a little baby...be gentle with me!" Adult horses, when confronted with the same action that promotes gum popping in young horses, tend to respond either with, "Okay, I'll comply," or "I will overpower your action." Two year olds are like teenagers in that they mentally bounce between being a child and being an adult. The trick in dealing with two-three year olds is to be able to tell

which side of maturity the horse is on at any given moment which may be difficult.

Using the bonder on young horses requires a very laid back, almost indifferent approach. The bonder is best performed low-key and matter of factly with all horses but young immature horses require an almost feather light approach.

If you have a horse that is exceptionally anxious you may want to adjust the bonder accordingly. The bonder does not need to be done all at once. With a highly agitated horse, you might increase the initial distance by staying on one side of the pen and gradually claiming the middle as the horse accepts your presence. If you have a horse that is blindly circling or racing around the pen erratically you can stop the circling by claiming a wedge of the pen for your own and not allowing the horse to enter it. As soon as you decide to stop a wildly circling horse, quickly get to the spot it left when you made the decision to stop it so that when it comes around again you'll be there. Let the horse know that is your area and if it comes into your area there will be trouble. Leave yourself enough room between you and the pen fence so that if the horse's momentum carries it into your section, you can let it go by.

Taking a wedge means thinking of the RP as a pie and the wedge as a piece of the pie. You stand in the wedge halfway between the center and the fence and prevent the horse from entering the wedge. If you prevent it from entering your wedge it will retreat in the other direction. When it comes around, and it may very well do so, it will retreat in the direction it came. It may go back and forth several times before it stops on the opposite of the the enclosure. Then you can calmly go back into the center and resume the bonder from there.

This bonder as it is set up, is for 3 year olds and up. (I don't know why the first draft said yearlings. It works on them, just isn't as predictable.) It is for horses of all levels of training. It is designed to instill a mental bonding between horse and human. It puts you one with your horse...it is a platform, a spring board to a mind boggling unity.

The bonding process itself is pretty concrete. It is a sequence of achieving and passing through different stages of herd dynamic negotiation that establishes a leader/herd member relationship where the horse looks for and accepts the wishes of the leader. The bonding aspects are also pretty straight forward. This bonder **WILL** mentally join you to your horse. It is up to you to recognize and maintain that bond. You recognize the bond by the changes in the horse and in you. You maintain that bond by tuning yourself into what that horse is saying and doing and acting accordingly in a positive manner.

Since the bonder involves horses and requires some horse handling abilities, it is important to know that if you engage in horse handling activities you accept the risks involved. Having personally known people who have both been killed and vegetated by horses, it is my desire to lessen these occurrences. Your safety is the first concern. The safety of the horse is a close second.

I want to stress again that I have yet to have a problem with the bonder procedure or to have the bonder fail to work from the moment the nuances of it fell into place for me. But I am VERY, VERY experienced with horses and this procedure. Properly performed, this procedure goes so smoothly it is very possible to be lulled into a false sense of security. You must keep in mind, horses are known for unexpected and unpredictable actions. Be sure you take all possible safety precautions.

I used to say, "The ideal bonding area is a 60 foot diameter round pen." That was when I was relying on mental measuring. Having since worked tape-measured 60' pens, I've revamped my ideal. The ideal bonding area is a round pen large enough to keep the horse a safe distance away from you for as long as you wish, yet small enough you don't get exhausted moving around in it. My new ideal is somewhere around 50'. (Oh yes, those 10' DO make a major difference.)

The smaller the round pen, the more centrifugal force and physical strain there is on the horse as it

moves. Since we hope to keep the horse's speed to a minimum, joint strain is usually not a factor to worry about. Larger breeds are at a disadvantage in smaller pens and cannot move as freely as smaller breeds. The larger the round pen the more difficult it is to control the movements of the horse. The pen does not have to be "round." In the absence of a round pen I have used other enclosures and even made temporary ones in the corner of a larger arena using jumps, boards, pallets, ropes, whatever I could find to keep the horse contained. I have no problem with corners, others may. If the horse sticks in the corners find something to put in the corners that will prevent the horse from "hiding" in them. Ideally, the horse should be unable to get farther than 30 feet from you at anytime and you should be able to keep a similar safety distance between you until the horse asks if it is okay to approach you.

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We Begin The Bonder...

I take the horse into the round pen and set it free. Nothing on the horse... no halter, no leadline, nothing. I move to the center of the pen and wait for a few moments. I allow the horse to do whatever it wants. If it wants to stand, run, hang over the rail, whatever, so be it. I try to not look directly at the horse during this time, but I usually watch him out of the corner of my eye. I want to give him every opportunity to acknowledge my presence even though I know he's not likely to. And if he does acknowledge my presence and comes over and acts buddy buddy, I'm not going to accept that anyway...because it is an action he chooses to suit his own whims. I don't want buddy buddy. I want "What is your wish?"

My goal is to have the horse obviously come up to me and patiently await my directions. If through some quirk of fate, the horse does do that initially without having gone through any previous herd dynamic before, I will still insist we go through the bonder so that the horse and I both have the memory of the sequence and effects. I want the horse to discover I *KNOW* how to be a leader and I have the ability to lead.

If the horse has been through the bonder previously (either with me or someone else) and the horse obviously comes up to me and patiently awaits my directions, I will accept that and act accordingly until it demonstrates it's having second thoughts. But since we're talking previously un-bondered horses here, I don't accept apparent acceptance of my leadership if the horse has not previously experienced my leadership.

THE HORSE MUST *DEMONSTRATE* ITS ACCEPTANCE BY GOING THROUGH THE PROCESS. It simply must go through channels, to use a cliche.

For the most part, the horse ignores me and I ignore him. This is as far from bonding as we can get. I don't think he really cares about me because his actions say he doesn't. I'm the last thing on his mind. There are far more important things around than me. "That's my buddy, Bosco, over there! Hi Bosco!!!" The rails on the pen are more important than I am. Heck, something moving on the next farm is more important than I am. If he does have any interest in me, it's usually "Anything in this for me?"

He may be content with this situation, but I'm not. And if he was in a herd ignoring the higher members of the herd so blatantly, they wouldn't like it either. Even though he and I are the only ones there, we are a herd. Since every herd needs a leader (that's nature's way, actually, nature's **law**) and he and I are the only two candidates, one of us better step up to the plate and hit the ball or we will be out.

Chances are good people have been letting HIM hit the ball all his life. But people, as a rule, don't understand the leader game and act unpredictably. The horse acts like a horse, the human acts like a

human. Two different species. There is no unity there. No bond. The human has no idea what the horse is saying when, without regard, it enters the human's space. . The human does not react in a manner the horse expects. The result is confusion. The horse does not respect the human because they have not gone through the respect or bonding interaction ages of genetics have instilled in the horse. It may tolerate the human all day long, day in and day out, and still not respect the human. It has not worked out the ranking order in an instinctive manner, therefore, it is not totally certain how to act toward the human.



"Hmmm...that is an interesting little whatever it is..."

As I said, he's ignoring me and I'm tapping my foot (figuratively) in annoyance. Since I'm not happy and have greater reasoning abilities than he does, I want to fix this problem. First, I have to make him aware there **is** a problem and that I'm not happy about it. So, I mentally cloud up and rain and tell him, "I am NOT happy. You are ignoring me and because you are doing that, I want you to leave now!" I will do whatever it takes to get him to move away and keep moving. I look into his eyes and glare at him as I advance toward him in an "I'm just going to chew on you awhile" manner. If he is moving already as if looking for a way out of the pen to greener pastures, I let him move and keep looking directly at him. As long as he's moving the way I want, I stay in the middle of the pen. I only leave the middle as necessary to signal him to do something and then return as quickly as I can.

MOST of the time I need nothing other than my mental energy and body language to get the horse to move away and keep moving until I say otherwise. There are those horses who require a little more effort to get moving for whatever reason. For those, I do what it takes to get them to move around the pen. If a horse does not move without serious pushing (waving a whip, tossing a rope, etc.) it is doing more than ignoring you. It is ignoring you AND challenging you to do something about it at the same time. You then have to step up the energy and the body language to the point it takes to get him to

move away.

(UPDATE) Previously it was not real clear about the use of whips, ropes, etc, to direct the more "resistant" horse. I personally seldom had to resort to a rope, or whip and in the interest of striving for perfection I preferred to downplay their use. However, in the round pen teaching someone how to do it, I discovered having something they were used to and understood handy gave them more confidence.

During a clinic in Wisconsin I was working with an experienced horsewoman, who wasn't using a whip, and an off the range mustang. As she moved toward it to make the horse move it backed toward her and mule kicked at her head missing her so close I thought she had been kicked in the face. After that, I make sure everyone has a whip, (and use one myself to demonstrate its use) and get them to use it as a physical extension of their arm. Use whatever you need to use to control the horse while keeping a safe distance. At all times you want to strive toward using JUST the amount of pressure needed to get the job done. If he's moving, stop exerting the pressure. If he stops doing what you want, apply it.



"Now I want you to leave in this direction!"

Usually, his eyes get big and he acts surprised by me telling him to get out of my sight, which he is, and since he's surprised and caught off guard by my displeasure he complies with my wishes. This is his way of saying, "Forget you! You are nothing! I will just leave you here all alone to think about *your* attitude! Humph!"



(UPDATE) I said earlier the horse has only two options when presented with the actions of a leader and they are become the leader or follow. If he chooses the become the leader option he may immediately move in on you with an "I'll show you whose leader, let's you and I duke it out for the job" attitude. In nature the two leader wannabes would close into each other and start exchanging blows until one gives up or is severely injured. You don't need to be a rocket scientist to figure out that isn't too smart for a human to do. So you move around and come at him from the side and apply your pressure directly into his side. When he moves to set up again, you move to his side again. This defeats the duking it out option, you're doing all the duking. Since he cannot over power you (hopefully) you have removed his leader option. The only thing left is follower. At that point he retreats to reassess the situation. "Forget you! I'm leaving! I'm taking my marbles and getting out of here."

My visual (eye to eye contact mixed with focusing just behind his shoulder) and physical pressure at this point says, "No, you will not leave me here, I will just follow right along behind you! I'm not quite done with you yet!" Since I am standing pretty much in the center of the circle he's making, I am always the same distance behind him no matter how long or how fast he goes. He is not able to leave me in the dust.



"Oh! Oh! He's still right behind me..now what?"

Since horses are pretty intuitive he soon thinks, "Oh! Oh! I am not getting away! He is still the same distance behind me! I have a problem!" At that moment, I have become something very important to him. So important, he dedicates one of his ears to me. The other ear whips and wanders, the ear closest to me focuses on me. Yes, I am suddenly very important. I must be dealt with in some manner. If he does not get me to call off the chase, my displeasure will land on him. He is in danger of me catching him. The ear does not have to be on me continuously to meet this condition, just the greater part of the time.



"Turning him back and forth on a short section actually gives him time to think."

The purpose is not to wear the horse down or exhaust him. It is merely to set up thinking opportunities. I seldom let a horse go around more than 4-6 times in one direction before I change his direction. I change his direction by going to the opposite edge of the pen from where he's at when I decide to change the direction. As he comes around he'll see me moving to cut him off and he'll stop and go back the way he came. Each direction change is a stop, turn and think breather. If the horse is getting too warm and or tired, I don't let him make any laps, I turn him repeatedly on one half, or smaller, sections of the pen. I refer to this turning him back and forth along one small section of the pen as "arc-ing." If he is getting far too tired or overheated, I will even stop for the time being, the day, whatever it takes. There is no failing with this bonder. You gain something toward bonding no matter where you stop the session.



"Dang! He's STILL there!"

Often he will take a look at me as he's going around to see if he can pick up a clue on how to deal with me, he may even start making the circle smaller by circling closer in a "You're joking, aren't you?" manner. When he looks at me I signal him to keep moving and if necessary, I increase pressure to send him back out to the rail. That tells him there is no doubt I'm not joking and he keeps moving.



"You're joking, right?"

At this point he usually starts blaming me for his problem. He may pin his ears, snake his head at me, come closer and cow kick at me, flip his butt at me, any combination of threat signals to tell me he's not pleased either. He's saying, "This is all your fault! I think I'll just sail in there and mud pie you so easy!" I am not the blame for his problem, he is. He is in the presence of a horse-acting-like being who is insisting he follow nature's law often expressed as "Lead, follow or get out of the way!" and he is not complying with the law.

Let's examine lead, follow or get out of the way. He can't lead - he gave up that option by acknowledging I was superior enough to him to get him to leave in the first place. He can't get out of the way - the enclosure prevents that. The only choice he has left is to follow. Nature and his genetics and my will say that is his ONLY option. Nature has programmed him to follow. AND HE WILL DO THAT. I can take any number of horses who are not mentally-ill or hormonally unbalanced, set them up in a lead, follow or get out of the way situation and they ALL will follow. Some will follow more quickly and willingly than others, but they will all follow. Now, I need to backtrack a little...Do I *KNOW* it works on all horses? No. I haven't worked all horses yet. I do know that this bonder has worked on ALL the horses I've used it on.

I ignore his threats which tells him, "No, you won't do any of that, you'll just keep going." If it is a fairly strong threat in that it turns and starts in toward me, I glare at him and close in on him which says, "If you come into me, you will really have problems!" I only move enough towards him to convince him I am **willing** to mix it up. Since he told me he was uncertain of how to deal with me at the beginning of the bonder and acknowledged that uncertainty by moving away, I can be reasonably sure he is **still** uncertain and will veer off at the first sign I'm prepared to retaliate. Under no circumstances do I put myself close enough to him at this point for him to reach me. If I feel I need to confront a half-hearted aggressive advance and enforce compliance, I will approach from the side, his least defensible area, and use the longe whip as rapidly and vigorously as needed. Just like a lead mare deals with this aggression and will start kicking away without the least bit of concern for where the kicks land, I won't care where the whip lands and I'll keep applying it until he calls off the aggression.

The threats, tantrums, aggression **displays** are a normal reaction on the part of the horse but some

horses do not exhibit these behaviors. They go from fleeing to acceptance fairly quickly and cooperatively.

At this point he's ready for the next stage. He'll shake his head, mutter and mumble under his breath and then his mouth will visibly start working. You may even see teeth and tongue. Once you see the mouth movement he's thinking, "Sheesh! Tried everything I can think of to get him to do what *I* want him to do, nothing worked. Maybe I better try to get along with him..."

"I know! I'll just tell him I'm an easy going ol' grass eater and I really think we'd do better if he and I agreed to be a team and I'm willing to let him lead the team." He lowers his head as he moves, which in effect, tells me that. Head-lowering is head lowering. He may skim his nose along the ground, or may just lower it somewhere below his normal carry height. Once we have reached that stage I let him make another lap, maybe two and then I turn my back on him and wait a few moments for him to come up behind me and tell me he's there. I like to have him make an effort to come to me because it shows a little more determination to bond on his part. However, if he does not come into me, I casually walk directly in front of him at a 45% angle from his shoulder. At that point he usually falls in behind me and follows me willingly around the pen. We have bonded. We are one unit, our spirits have blended, our minds have met and come to agreement.

A number of people have told me they got everything else but there was no licking and chewing. I have done this procedure so many times, I know what to look for and it, like head lowering, is always there. Giving it some thought, I probably should say ANY mouth action is "licking and chewing" because some horses do it so imperceptibly if you are not looking very closely, you will miss it. At a recent clinic, I had one horse that chewed constantly but the owner couldn't see it. Another horse was flicking his tongue out like a snake and everyone could see it. It is a matter of degrees. Any lip action is sufficient. If the horse is complying and you haven't seen mouth action, you probably just missed it.

If the horse watches you attentively but seems reluctant to follow you, it may be that you have not convinced it that it is an accepted part of the herd. What I do if I feel that is the case, is short-arc the horse. I send the horse out and then change its direction as rapidly as I can until the horse stops and looks at me. At that point I nonchalantly walk up and slowly walk away. The horse will almost always follow at that point.

Sometimes it helps to gently reach under the horse's jaw and momentarily guide it or "unlock" it as you move away. You should be able to tell within half a step if the horse is going to follow. If it doesn't, try another unlocking touch. Another tip that helps is to remember to initially lead in a direction that requires a one direction movement for the horse to follow. If you lead away too abruptly it may be too distracting if the horse has to move its front feet in one direction and its hind feet in another direction to follow. Another little tip is to lean your upper body *slightly* forward as you start to move and to lead off with the leg that is on the same side as the leg the horse would need to move first to comply. This takes advantage of mirroring.



"At this point we've bonded."

When this stage is arrived at he has accepted me as leader and will tolerate, for the most part, anything I do to him short of causing him pain. I say for the most part because if I grab a spook sheet and pop it on him he may get uneasy and move away. If he does, I send him out for a couple more laps. He often shakes his head side to side (Hmmm..why did I do that? I'm back out here again!" or whips his nose in a circle ("Ooops..screwed up, sorry.") After he does a couple laps, I ignore him again and let him come in. If he doesn't, I angle across him and he follows along. Then I flap the sheet again or do whatever it was that made him leave.

It takes more to make him leave each time he returns, and he returns faster each time he leaves, until he is leaving and returning so quickly, it is but a slight movement. Usually by that time, he much more willingly allows me to do pretty much what I want to do to him. I have free access to his mouth, his nostrils and his ears. This attitude carries over to other things as well, his first saddling, a new training bit and so on. As time goes on and you actively watch and listen to all of his movements with a "What is he saying when he does this?" attitude and then acting accordingly on that information, the bond you have forged will strengthen.

The rapport this bonder generates between horse and human is so moving, I have difficulty getting the human's feet back on the ground. A feeling I know all too well. I feel such an emotional connection to each horse I bond with that I almost zone out.

I enjoy seeing the look on a student's face when she gets on her formerly antsy horse all by herself with no one helping for the first time ever. I have had to threaten a rider off her horse because she was in Nirvana trotting her best ever 20 meter circle over and over. Being able to take a highly agitated horse and with a mere touch having it calm immediately, is truly spirit blending and intensely mentally gripping.



This bonder should take less than one hour from start to finish. The actual time does depend on the individual horse. Some horses will take longer than others, but 30 minutes is about all it takes for me if I do not have to do a lot of explaining to observers. This bonder is but one part of a series of complimentary scenarios that are designed to build unity between horse and human. A unity that will enable them to work together as one in anything they go on to do.

The bonder is not an exercise and is ONLY intended to be done when you feel you and your horse are having communication problems and then it only needs to be done until the horse exhibits compliance. Touch ups, if needed will be needed less and less and will take less time to perform. My formerly nutso riding mare has never needed a touch up. One of the colts needed it about every three days but it got to the point where heading to the round pen was enough.

If in reading this bonder narration, you feel there is something that needs to be clarified or addressed, please let me know. I invite you to join my Facebook group [Marv Walker Horses](#) which has a considerable collection of experienced bonder-believers where all manner of horse subjects are welcomed. If you're interested in attending or possibly hosting a clinic in your area, I'll be glad to talk with you.

I also am available to discuss your horse problems by phone. Should you feel the need to talk to me, I am usually home most evenings from 9pm to 12 midnight ET. Of course, you may call during the day, but I'm not always here during the day. If you miss me and live in the US, I'll return your call as soon as I can. Unfortunately International callers will just have to call back or email me Marv@MarvWalker.com (770) 760-9561



"Happy Bonding"

Best to you...keep me informed.

Marv Walker

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The Head Down Cue



No spooked horse EVER has its head down. A spooked horse has its head up where it can see what is going on around it or where it is going if it bolts.

A relaxed horse has its head down.

If you can get the horse's head down it will become less tense if only because it is less able to see what has caused it to be tense.

We can use the tendency to be less tense when the head is lowered to our advantage. We teach the horse a head down cue and when the horse tenses we tell it to lower its head.

Once you have put the horse successfully through the herd dynamics procedure the horse will allow you to move its head up and down at will because you have established the herd leader / follower relationship and the horse is focusing on you. There is no way you can physically move the horse's head up and down if it does not allow it. The horse is fully capable of tossing you away from its head if it chooses to.

To teach the head down cue the horse must be focused on you. If it is not, then take it to your enclosure and give it a herd dynamics refresher. You shouldn't have to put the horse through the whole

procedure, just direct its movements until you see it is focused on you.

Once the horse is focused on you place one hand on its face between nose and eyes, the other on its poll just behind the ears and tell it "Head down, head down, head down" while stroking its face in a downward motion as you lightly press, release, press, release downward at the poll. Do not try to push the horse's head down, you are physically unable to do it. The hand resting on the poll is merely a "Don't raise your head higher" cue. Let the horse move its head down on its own. You soon will see that you can position the horse's head where you want it with your hands.

And you will be surprised at how long the horse will allow you to hold its head where you want it.

Keep at it until head lowering is automatic and the horse will drop its head on voice command alone. If you are riding and you feel the horse tensing you can tell it, "Head down."

Once you have the head down cue anchored you can do the "Head up!" cue. Between the head down cue and the head up cue you can position the horse's head where you want it while riding. If you are showing and you don't want verbal commands, teach a verbal command with a mechanical cue and when the horse has both anchored simply switch to the mechanical cue.

The head down cue even comes in handy when haltering and bridling. Rather than chasing the horse's head you can simply hold the head gear below the horse's head and say, "Head down."

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Despooking With Herd Dynamics

Using herd dynamics to despook your horse is quite simple.

Once we understand the concept of herd dynamics (the bonder) and are comfortable with our ability to send the horse out and bring it in as we choose we are ready to begin our despooking.

We do not want to desensitize the horse to anything in particular but we want to use whatever we want to despook it. We want to do what we want to do with the horse when we want to do it and what we want to do it with.

Initially we want to work within the round pen or enclosure because that is where it is most convenient. As it becomes more and more difficult to spook the horse, and it will, then we can continue outside the pen in other locations.

For instance, we have the horse in the center of the pen just standing patiently beside us. We are doing whatever and if the horse is paying no attention we attempt to get its attention however we can. We may be quietly standing there and a bee may come heading up our nose. Naturally, this is going to cause us to suddenly begin yelling, jumping and flailing around. If the horse stays, great. If it doesn't, forget the bee and go into the "Excuse me?? Where are you going?? We are a team! To remind you, go in this direction a couple of times, then this, now come in here," mode.

If we're tacking up the horse and in a relatively safe position and we suddenly "kill" a large horse fly on the horse with a slap of our glove, hand or girth strap we expect the horse to stay with us. If it does we act like nothing happened. If it does not and it leaves our work area we immediately go into our leader / follower reminder and give it a few directions and bring it back in.

We creatively spook the horse away then bring it back to us. We do what we have to do to get the horse

to leave while mentally expecting the horse to stay by us (look to us to evaluate the spook). We clang a cowbell, we sling a bag of cans at its feet, we put a noisy tarp or sheet over it, whatever we can think of. As time goes on it takes more and more to spook the horse.

We look for situations to put the horse in that might cause the horse to be concerned.

And all the time we do this we are indifferent to the spooks. Our attitude toward the spooks is more important than the horse's attitude to the spooks.

In addition we often "go nuts" in the presence of the horse. One time we may feed quietly, another time we may feed as noisily as we can. We may throw a bucket down the hallway, rattle feed sacks, whatever. We may sing loudly or whoop a time or two (they are different things). We may bang things against the wall.

We do all these unexpected things while watching the horse out of the corner of our eye. We don't want to make the horse climb out the stall window. We just want the horse to blame us for everything that happens. If a tree falls over in Bangladesh, and the horse hears it, we want the horse to blame us for it. Any time it's spooked we want it to think, "It's just another of those goofy things s/he does."

Our goal is to show the horse that we, the leader, pay no attention to spooks of any kind. If the leader pays no attention, it must not be that much of a spook.

If something gets the horse's attention out on the trail we ignore it and keep going. If the horse pays too much attention to it we simply say, "Excuse me?? Keep going!"

The stronger your herd leader/follower relationship becomes the less spooked your horse will be by anything including those things you haven't desensitized to.

You'll quickly see that less and less bothers your horse.

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Ever Thought Of Writing A Book?

Ebook readers are flying off the shelves. Kindles, NOOKs, IPADS, IPODS and on and on.

Ebooks are now outselling traditional print books much to the chagrin of traditional publishers and authors. Ebooks can even be read on pretty much any computer in addition to the tremendous numbers of portable ebook readers, so you see how the market for ebooks has exploded.

Never before has an author been able to get a book written, published and distributed faster with less cost, hassle and effort. It depends on the publication, but thanks to the Internet an ebook can be written, published and distributed in a matter of hours.

Formatting your ebook is the biggest hassle. When I decided to do my first ebook I thought, "How tough can it be?" After all I had been in the printing business in one way or another for years. I even had my own graphics company for nearly a decade.

Plus, I was a freelance author whose work has appeared in a number of traditional print publications.

I set out scouring the Net for the "How to." And there is plenty of that. After going over a good number of the "tutorials" I found out that a lot of people seemed to know how to do it, but they didn't know how to tell anyone else to do it. When even the geeks have to ask the geeks questions, there is little hope for the common Marv. The more of the stuff I read, the more confused I got. I wore my fingernails to the quick scratching my head.

After some time I gave up on the tutorials and took a couple ebooks and tore them apart, examined all the pieces and figured out how they were created after a bunch of sleepless nights.

A few more sleepless nights and my first ebook rolled off the computer. I put it on the Net the day it finished and while I was catching up on my sleep it was selling.

I'm available to help you in producing and marketing your ebook. I may even be willing to work out a distribution deal with you.

Email me at Marv@MarvWalker.com and let's talk.

Best to you,

Marv Walker

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Attacks On Horse (And Private Livestock) Ownership

In case you didn't know it, animal ownership in America is under attack from every side unless you are a huge agricultural business. Animal rights groups have gone over the edge of logic and common sense - PETA, HSUS, and on and on. Our number one enemy is actually the government. They are vigorously working to make small farming extremely difficult by passing outlandish extremely burdensome ordinances - calling livestock manure toxic waste, for example - and forcing farmers to sell off their land by taxing them on its POTENTIAL use and value. The list of their attacks grows daily in size and determination.

The National Animal Identification System (NAIS - No Animal Is Safe) is a prime example. Each time the citizens rise up against it the government responds to the fervor by telling people it's dead then they simply call it some other name and press on. Go to Google and search [NAIS stuff](#), or whatever they are calling it these days. and join the battle. NOTHING is more of a threat to your animal ownership than any form of NAIS by this or any other name they want to call it.

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Thank You!

Thank you for purchasing this *"Easily Despoil Your Horse In A Way It Understands Using Herd Dynamics And Its Natural Instincts"* ebook and I hope you have found it helpful, enlightening and educational.

If something should happen and you find yourself in confusing territory with your horse, don't forget MarvWalker.com. I have a BUNCH of pages on my site, MarvWalker.com dealing with a wide range of horse problems. In addition, I have a good inventory of educational DVDs and ebooks at MarvWalker.com that will help you to become a better horse person. Be sure and check out my *"How To Get Into The Head Of Any Horse In Minutes"* \$3.99 E-Book at MarvWalker.com/bondbook.htm

Thanks again,

Marv Walker

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